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Doyle Ainslie.

THE SONG OF THE STEWARTS

THE SONG OF THE STEWARTS

PRELUDE

BY

DOUGLAS AINSLIE

AUTHOR OF

“JOHN OF DAMASCUS,” “MOMENTS,” ETC.

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I DEDICATE THE PRELUDE TO
THE SONG OF THE STEWARTS TO
MY DEAR COUSIN
CHARLES EDWARD STEWART
OF FOTHERGILL.

861850

PREFACE

POETRY is always its own explanation, for a poet is either articulate, and therefore to be understood, or he is inarticulate, and to that extent not a poet. All themes are equal in themselves. Their æsthetic values lie in the intensity of their appeal to the poet or artist.

To me the deeds of the Stewarts appeal more intensely than any other theme. Here I have seen the ancient House in crimson blossom on the fields of Falkirk and of Bannockburn, and in Robert II., son of the Lord High Stewart and grandson of Robert Brus, giving the first Stewart king to History.

I hope to follow the fortunes of the Stewarts, in glory and in woe, from our fascinating early kings, to the Queen of Hearts and Scots ; from her son, James VI. and First, to the Martyr King ; and by the flower-strown ways of the Restoration and the later calamities of James VII. and Second, to James VIII. and Third and the 'Fifteen, ending with the heroic romance of Prince Charlie, at whose tomb the Right Lion Scots yet mourns and yet keeps guard.

Such is my desire, but, *χαλεπὰ τὰ καλά*—things beautiful are difficult—and this Prelude, so called because in it the Stewarts have not yet ascended any of their thrones, must now be judged independently of successors.

I wish to thank two friends for services rendered

in connection with the Prelude to *The Song of the Stewarts*: Mr J. K. Stewart of Edinburgh, Secretary of the Stewart Society, and author of the valuable *Story of the Stewarts*, for the use he has allowed me to make of the Society's Journal, both in announcing this book and in printing brief extracts from it ; and Mr George Eyre-Todd of Glasgow, Editor of *The Scottish Field*, and one of the greatest living authorities on the history and literature of Scotland, for friendly counsel and for placing before me the curious old *Ballad of the Bluidy Stair*, on which I have based one of the poems in this volume.

DOUGLAS AINSLIE.

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THE SONG OF THE STEWARTS

Invocation

NOW Muse descend again to me,
Thou that didst smile so graciously,
Leading me over Eastern lands,
The Cross, the Crescent in thy hands,
And twined within thy heavy hair
The lotus bloom I found most fair.
Descend again, but now no more
Tread thou with me an Eastern shore,
For of my country I would sing,
Of Scotland and of Stewart king.
Behold thou comest, sweet my Muse,
Nor gladsome goddess wilt refuse
Beauty and charm and rose-crowned love.
But one walks on the cliffs above
And gazeth out on the green sea.
Why cometh thus to thee and me
This lady veiled? She draweth near
And speaketh thus: "My sister dear,
Muse of gay wisdom and of bright
Rippling of tresses in the light,
Will guide thee well a mile or twain,
Yet without me 'twere all in vain,
O poet, that thou strive to sing
The deeds of Stewart Queen and King.

Invocation

I am the Muse Melpomene,
And fair as she, thou'lt grant to me."
With that she draws her veil aside
And stands before me, Sorrow's Bride.
Her sister hides her azure eyes
And rising on her wings she flies
To light upon yon poppied strand
Where green waves kiss the flowry land.
" Gaze on my eyes if you would tell
The secret of the Stewarts' spell."
Thus speaks the Muse of Tragedy,
And gazing in her eyes I see
Beauty and Sovran Charm whose breath
Is mingled with the Dust of Death,
The Risen Sun of Royal Right
Hurled downward by the Powers of Night,
And Vain Devotion chained to these
Drain Suffering's Chalice to the lees.
Sisters ! I yield me to your care,
Lead on, I follow : dark and fair.

The Misty Dawn

(THE OLD PEDIGREE)

“**T**HOU shalt get kings, though thou be none,
Banquo, Lochaber’s thane !”
Hark to the witch ! The bloody game’s
begun !

Hark to the witch again !—

“That twofold balls and treble sceptres carry” ;

Yet on the spell-bound moor,

The world’s wits yet with Shakespeare’s genius marry,

Genius that is more sure

Than very sooth, though sooth this too may be,

And sooth old Barbour’s tales

Of Banquo slaughtered and his son must flee :

Childe Fleance fly to Wales !

Let be ! ’Twas truth our island Shakespeare told,

He of the Stewarts spake,

Whose hands so long those treble sceptres hold,

To make and to unmake.

Dim is the dawn upon the sea and earth,

Invisible the bride,

Nesta of Fleance, and their Walter’s birth

Mists of the morning hide.

And Fleance fell, as Banquo fell before,

And from Llewellyn’s halls

Walter his son at Breton Alan’s door,

His mother’s kinsman, calls

On Brittany, and more than succour grants
 Alan the Red, the Earl;
Armour and steeds—and blue his eye enchants,
 Set amid golden curl.
For Walter, as his father Fleance, wed
 Old Brittany's fair daughter,
And with the Conqueror and the Earl he sped
 To Hastings o'er the water.
But "northward!" ever, ever "northward ho!"
 The morning south winds fly,
And on their wings shall down of thistle go,
 Though ne'er so far the cry,
"Rise up, Lord Stewart," quoth good Malcolm King,
 And first of all his race
Walter the Stewart brings tradition in,
 Fills the Lord Stewart's place.
When Walter died, his son had passed the sea
 To fight the infidel,
Yet came again as to the hive the bee;
 At Edgar's feet he fell.
King Edgar's Stewart on his feet he stood
 And at King Edgar's side
Full many a year he toiled for Scotland's good,
 Wedded a bonny bride.
.
.
.
.
.
Dim legends of old days, dim shades that fight,
 And love and lose and win
Behind the veil, farewell, thou gray twilight,
 Welcome the morning in!

(THE NEW PEDIGREE)

'Twas thus that in days of old men followed the pedigree,
Whiles yet great dragons dwelt in fen, yet fairies
danced on lea ;

And the toad was the Prince once more, when the poet
had set him free.

Yea, whatsoever the poet sang, behold the truth was
found,

And the simple with the very wise in sympathy were
bound.

Yet the dragon haunts the fen for these, yet Oberon
rules the green,

As truly as any monarch else upon this shadowy scene,
While the world of the real treads the dust of the road
that lies between.

.

To the Seneschals of Dol, Dinan, winds an Ariadne's
thread,

To those ancient counts of Brittany who reigned when
Cæsar led

His hosts to Gaul, but through the mist of time new
light is shed

On Flaald or Float of Brittany, that Alan had to son,
Who in the days of Henry First over the channel won,
And wed Adeliza de Hesding, who bare sons three or four,
Whereof was the second Walter, and some there be
are sure

This Walter was the first High Stewart the keys of
office bore.

And the proofs that they bring are many, the skein
of the thread split fine,

For the eyes of the searchers are Argus, and the love
of the ancient line
Yet draws men surely as a spell the meshes to dis-
entwine.
Now of the Abbey of Paisley which Walter the first
Lord Stewart
Founded in good King David's reign and all its rights
secured :
Certain it is that Walter's name stands clear upon the
roll,
And certain that monks of Shropshire Clune the
Abbey's work control.
Now William the son of Alan, brother of Walter,
rules the whole
Of the Lordships of Clune and Oswestrie, and from
William descend
The Earls of Arundel whose bloods with the Dukes
of Norfolk blend
By the marriage of Mary the heiress with the Duke,
whose life hath end
In the days of Queen Elizabeth—would set on
England's throne
Mary the Queen of Hearts and Scots whose right
outweighed her own.
Now whether or no these Walters twain, one and the
same man be !
And whether or no their ancestors were Counts of
Brittany,
Let the heralds that are wise decide : I hold no
certainty.
But of the proofs a pair they cite, and the first is the
ancient name,

Which in the courts of Brittany and the Stewarts
is the same

With the English Earls of Arundel, and the likeness
too they claim

By the shields of the houses, by the *fesse barry* of
Arundel,

Fesse Cheque of the Lords High Stewarts, that Scots-
men know so well,

Indented of those ancient Counts of Dol and of Dinan.

Thus names and shields most similar through all
three races ran,

And in the origin all three came of a single clan.

Yet a proof the more was wanting, and that the wont
and use

Of the people of Scotland and England, and this they
careful choose.

When Robert the Second of Scotland was like the
throne to lose

And by Balliol the pretender his exile was procured,

Then the Earl of Arundel laid claim to the office of
Lord High Stewart,

And this his right, a shadow, was bought by Edward
Third.

But although the right were a shadow, what Arundel
then averred

Was that if the Lord High Stewarts failed their rights
by him were heired.

Thus have I faithfully set down, as near as verse may be,
What the men of the days bygone did hold of the
Stewart's pedigree,

And what those men perchance more wise in the
wisdom of this day

Where much is new discovered and much forgot
perday.

In the stress of the new-won empires of the air and
the whirling wheel,

Methinks that the times to come will no better things
reveal,

Than the songs that sung the bards of old and the
clash of the ancient steel.

SUNRISE

THE FIRST STEWART OF HISTORY

Walter, Son of Alan

LORD HIGH STEWART. 1164-1177

LO! the Stewarts' sun is risen and in good
King David's reign
Flashes bright upon the Stewart and by
him is flashed again
From the lands of Paisley, Cathcart, Talahec, Le
Drip, Mutrene ;
Lord of these and of Lochwinnoch, Lord of Eaglesham
and east,
To the Lordship of all Innerwick is Walter's power
increased,
And when Malcolm¹ reigns o'er Scotland seem these
lands to be the least
By the Maiden's vast donations, blessed of Kelso
Abbey's priest.
Lord of Legerswood on Leader, Lord of Stenton,
Hassendean,
Ye will ask not for more titles, but for deeds to them,
I ween,
Deeds that are the mighty tree-stem, names its flutter-
ing leaves of green.

¹ Malcolm IV.

I must tell ye, then, of Norroway, of Harold Harfagar,
Who first the kingly circlet bound about his brows afar,
And drave the pirate Vikings forth where western
havens are.

These lit like ravenous birds of prey upon the Hebrides,
And crimson-crested off the Lewis must roll the white-
crest seas,

Till Harold's flag triumphant waves over his island fees.
After, for many an hundred year, between the
Norroway men,

The Danes and Orkneymen, these isles were won and
lost in vain,

Till the island sceptre fell at last to Norroway again.
Then Godred Crovan forty years ruled as Olave the
Red,

Whose son Black Olave followed him and gat a lissom
maid

Ragnhildis, hight the ancestress, the bride of Somerled.
Somerled Prince of all the Isles who had for ancestor
Conn of the Hundred Battles, that ancient lord of war,
Now slips a nuptial ring of gold around the island shore.
Lord of the Isles and all Argyll, with Malcolm Scotland's
King

Somerled signs an equal truce with a feather from his
wing,

But in the eagle's eerie not long the dove may sing.
Know ye Bute's tower of Rothesay, first of the
western isles

Lit by the bright young radiance of Stewart maiden's
smiles,

Where yet the Stewart's banner waves and nothing
is Argyll's ?

Here on a summer's evening the kinsmen of the
Stewart

Made music in their open hall, for well they were
assured

By the Norsemen's seal and writing, and by Malcolm's
might secured !

Full oft from golden harpsichord the hand of Isabel
Had drawn the song of victory forth, had drawn the
lover's spell

And soft her singing on the hearts of forty warriors fell.
When her last song had died away, this slip of Stewart's
tree

Passed like a moonbeam in a cloud, passed like her
minstrelsy

Forth from the circle of her kin, to gaze upon the sea.
Deep in the castle's shadow, the gray old chapel slept
And noiseless o'er the castle court slim Isabel she stept,
And seaward from the rampart gazed, when of a
sudden leapt

Fearsome a figure from the wall: "Fear not, fair
Stewart," cried,

For I am, Roderick lord of Mull, and thou shalt be
my bride,

So lay thy cheek upon my cheek, and nestle to my side."

"Avaunt! thou black-heart raven of Norroway's
black brood,"

Cried the Lady Isabel, "thy hands reek of my father's
blood,

And thou hast slain my brethren three, I swear it on
the rood!"

"Swear, an thou list, fair Stewart, swear and thou
swarest true :

Thy father and thy brethren three in open field I slew,
And as they fell around my head ravens o' Norroway
flew.

But thou shall'st o'er the waves this night : my galley
waits below :

And if thou come not, proud Stewart, a like fate
shall'st thou know.

Nay 'tis in vain to flee or cry !—he gripped her in the
shadow.

“ When stars drop from their beds of blue ! then
shall I be thy bride,

Thou raven heart o' Norroway,” maid Isabel she cried,
And steadfastly the stars of heaven in their blue beds
abide.

Straight in her breast of heaving snow the rover's
blade is driven,

And straight from out her body small her dovelike
soul is riven,

And steadfastly from beds of blue gaze down the stars
of heaven.

May morning dawns on Rothesay's tower : O but the
morn is fair !

White as pale rosebud plucked she lies, the breeze
upon her hair,

Red as red rose's petals strown her life-blood stains
the stair.

Hearts break ! no tears ! Her kinsmen all, grim
warriors stand around ;

They kneel to kiss her slim white hand, the blood-
stains on the ground,

Then pass into their galleys straight, will bear them
o'er the sound.

Scarce are the Stewarts come ashore, the news is at
Renfrew
Where dwells the Lord High Stewart, the news is
Scotland through,
How dastardly maid Isabel Roderick the rover slew.
King Malcolm and the Stewarts all, not long they have
to bide
Ere Roderick and those Viking lords come sailing up
the Clyde,
An hundred sail upon the gale they swell with cruel
pride.
“Let land! let land! the Norroway men” (’twas
Scotland’s Stewart spake),
And from their ravenous galleys beached, as winds
the scaly snake,
Those steel-clad men of Norroway their line of battle
make.
“St Bride for Scotland!” shouts the Stewart, and
straight upon the foe,
Their doubled strength of fury those mourning
Stewarts throw,
And what they leave, their countrymen in bloody
harvest mow.
See where he lies, that viking lord, of “fair and
piercing eye,”
Cries a Stewart to a Stewart, full well he knew to die!
Eftsoons! the mountains of our dead by him are
piled most high.”
But not for him the Stewarts stay, they seek the
ruffian lord
That did to death fair Isabel, for him the Stewart’s
sword

Waits as a lover for his love and as he leaps aboard
First one, then five they fall on him, all of the Stewart
 race,
And softly soft they bear him off clipt in a warm
 embrace,
They raise his steely vizor, they gaze upon his face.
They bind his hands and feet, and slow their daggers
 gentlewise,
Do glide into his ruffian heart, but first into his eyes :
“ Matched with the hell that waits on thee, thy death
 is Paradise.”
Only this word they speak to him, he answereth not
 again,
But smiles defiance on his foes, as though he knew
 no pain,
Yet though he smile, full well they know their
 vengeance is not vain.
Thus were the Norsemen conquered there, upon the
 banks of Clyde,
Yet little joy the Stewarts knew, where many Norse-
 men died,
For all did mourn maid Isabel, that perished in
 her pride.
Won is the battle of the west, the Lord High Stewart
 knows,
But ever in his noble heart a nobler longing glows ;
Fain would he found an Abbey fair that lofty walls
 enclose.
Kneeling he maketh due request, King Malcolm saith
 him, “ Yea.”
Southward to England, King and Stewart, do pass
 upon their way

Unto King Malcolm's English fief, the tower of
Fotheringay.

And do ye pale, oh ladies fair? But ye shall weep
with me

That mount your palfreys by my side through Stewart
history,

To meet thus soon this fatal name: yet hush! now
let it be.

Here are the charters signed and sealed, and higher
still and higher,

Sacred to God and to St James, soars Paisley's Abbey
spire,

Founded by Walter Stewart, and in Paisley Abbey's
choir,

For his salvation, body and soul, for Malcolm, David's
son,

For Henry King of England, for the Earl of Huntingdon,
Who is the Prince of Scotland, monks make many an
orison.

Alan Stewart

LORD HIGH STEWART. 1177-1204

MALCOLM the Maiden, good King of the
Scot,
Perchance was a maid in his teen,
But ere that he died, sith a maid he
was not,

For without him a maid had not been !
Cry you pardon, fair ladies, for frisk of the steed
Springing forth at the break of the day ;
Let his brother King William the Lion succeed
And the Lion of Scotland display.
For first of our kings on his banner there towered
“ Or a lion rampant, *gules*,
Azure armed and langued, in a tressure flowered,
Counter-flowered ” : but the heralds’ rules
Are a snare set for poets, with jewels for baits,
And I will not, like William the Lion,
Charge the College of Heraldry, as he did the fates,
For my fate I should certainly fly on !
Ah ! let us not dwell on the English amaze
When the Lion of Scotland rode
One man against fifty, nor think of Falaise
Nor how sorrowfully William bestrode
His war-horse, with legs tied beneath to the girth :
Oh ! Henry, the first of the name,
Thus to treat Scotland’s king ! did it make you mirth ?
His our pity, yours be the shame.

But hardly was Scotland brought under the yoke,
 Or the treaty seals dry at Falaise,
 When Richard the Lion of England broke
 Through the net of the artful phrase.
 " Let the Lion of Scotland return to his land,
 Let the treaty that Henry my sire
 Extorted from William of Scotland's hand
 Burn to ashes in the fire.
 Let the Scot pay such ransom as honour decree
 From one to another knight,
 And bid him be sure that whatever it be,
 'Twill be spenden in holy fight.
 Let him keep in our England the whole broad domain
 That his sires have held erewhile,
 Let the tenure each year, all untainted of gain,
 Be his falcon let soar at Carlisle !
 Thus spake England's Richard, the Lion of Heart,
 In the spirit of chivalry,
 Then he passed to the land where the faithful smart,
 With a goodly company.
 Wide, wide, do the banners of England stream,
 As the barons of England ride,
 And brightly the voyaging sun-rays gleam
 On a banner at Richard's side.
 'Tis David of Scotland, the Prince and the Peer,
 (He is Earl of Huntingdon,)
 And with him rideth his comrade dear,
 Alan Stewart, Walter's son.
 Richard of England and Philip of France !
 How the lilies were meshed in the mane
 Of the lion, and how by a fortunate chance
 These came disentangled again :

Not mine be the telling, nor Richard's Crusade,
Nor the prowess of Saladin,
Nor to echo the lilt of the song that betrayed
The Lion caged within.
For lo, as those helmeted palmers ride
To the storm of Jerusalem's wall,
Cometh one unbeknown to the Stewart's side :
'Tis William the Lion's call.
And behold the Stewart haste in fear
Over land and over sea ;
Though the world weep tears, more near, more
clear
Sounds the sigh from our own cuntry.
Right glad was the king when the Stewart came,
Kneeled low at his tottering throne,
And he told the tale of the sword and the flame
And the lieges' heavy moan :
How Harold the Yarl with his Norsemen rides
And their hands are red with blood ;
How the north is lost and how none abides
Their devilish hardihood.
" Stewart of Scotland, be yours to command " :
He hath marshalled the Scots array,
Breathed his soul in their soul, put his sword in their
hand,
They have passed o'er the water of Spey.
" Stewart of Scotland," cries Harold the Yarl,
" Wilt thou meet me on the plain ?
Let the armies draw near, let the banners unfurl,
But the battle be 'twixt us twain."
" Ay, that will I do," cries the Stewart, and straight
They have sought the smooth green ground :

In the roar of the furious river's spate
 The crash of the ax is drowned.
 Thus silent they fight till the middays' past
 And the Stewart's host cries loud,
 For the Stewart's ax hath made at the last
 Of Yarl Harold's sark his shroud.

And they bury him there on the banks of Spey,
 With his ax and his golden crown,
 And we to the Christ, they to Odin pray,
 As the salt tear trickles down.
 For the war was ended, when Harold fell,
 And the rebels kneel to the Stewart,
 Since they love the blessing of peace full well
 By the strong right arm secured.
 When the Stewart returns to the king again
 Where he sits in old Dunbar,
 He strives to kneel, but he strives in vain,
 For the king's arms round him are.
 Ay! he folds his Stewart in warm embrace
 Whose lordships are more by three,
 And the Stewart's wife lifts her blush-rose face :
 " I too shall have gift for thee."

Brave Alan the Stewart, seven hundred year
 Are between us where I stand,
 But I see your love and your loyalty clear,
 Feel your hand-clasp on my hand.

Walter Stewart

3D LORD HIGH STEWART. 1204-1246

WALTER the Stewart, as his sire, when a
youth was a gallant Crusader,
Wore the red cross on his breast, and the
“ Fesse Cheque ” banner above him
Floated, a witness to all that here stood the Stewart
of Scotland ;
For the Stewarts in days of old, as they sat in the king’s
council-chamber,
Moved on a chequered board, as a chess player moveth
his playthings,
Counters of silver and gold as they measured the
wealth of the nation.
These were the arms of the Stewarts, and always
proudly they bore them,
First in the council and first in the field, the Stewarts
of Scotland !
“ Stiward keeper of swine ! ” cry the gibbers, twisters
of language :
“ That is the name they bore and the swineherd’s
duty they rendered.”
O for the wisdom of fools ! it has folly no folly can
vie with ;
Stewarts indeed these were, not of one man, but of a
kingdom ;

Stewarts to kings, then kings in their turn, Stewarts
only to Godhead.

Fools were your folly but true, then " the swineherd's
duty was rendered "

Unto a people of swine by Charles, saint, monarch
and martyr !

.

Walter the Stewart I sing : he fought as his father
before him,

Fought for the Cross and returning, the king,
Alexander the Second,

Placed in his hand the sword, and the scales and the
balance of Justice.

Thus was he Stewart by birth and by worth was he
Law unto Scotland.

Alan of Galloway died, without son that should heir
his possessions,

Leaving three daughters, the wives of three Saxon
lords of the border,

Daughters of Alan the Earl but cousins of King
Alexander.

Then the wild men of Galloway rose and " never shall
Saxon noble

Rule o'er our wilds, but let Thomas, the old lord's
love-child, be master."

Thus they declared them for love, but the king for-
bade them be lovers.

As the course of the blood runs wild when the green
leaves of summer are sprouting,

And the heart will not bow to the head, nor the limbs
be at union together,

So was our Scotland of old, and the wild men of
Galloway, rising,
Spread desolation abroad as they marched on the
City¹ of Maidens.
Forth rode the king and his host ; they fled from the
lion of Scotland,
Chased like the deer to their wilds, and the kingdom
had peace for a short space.

But the hate of the Saxon was strong in their hearts,
and coming together,
Marched they once more to the East, and fire was the
breath of their nostrils.
Broke was the balance again, but the sword of Justice
upholden,
Grasped in the strong right hand of Walter the Stewart
of Scotland,
Smote to the death where it fell, and the wild men of
Galloway flying
Turned their face to the West, and the kingdom had
peace for a long space.

What of the Stewart's spouse ? She was Beatrice
daughter of Gilchrist,
Lord of the Earldom of Mar and of Marjorie, daughter
of Scotland,
Daughter of Scotland's Prince, own brother to Malcolm
and William.
Thus there flowed in the veins of the children born to
the Stewart
Blood of our ancient kings, whose crown in the fourth
generation

¹ Edinburgh.

Bound in a circle of gold the brow of the heir of the
Stewart.

.

Nuptials I sing once more for the King, Alexander
the Second

Sent forth his Stewart to France, with a prayer for
the hand of a Coucy.

Not of an ancient line was Enguerrand, Master of
Coucy ;

Small were his lands, but great was his heart, and the
Emperor Otho

Gave him his sister to wife, nor shamed him at equal
alliance,

For the spirit of chivalry yet springs forth from the
ancient motto :

“ King am I not, nor Prince am I not, I am Master
of Coucy.”

And the Stewart brought the maid to the king, and
the kingly purple was o’er her.

.

Pious as his sires bygone was this Walter Stewart of
Scotland,

And the Abbey of Paisley blessed with his love and
the gift of his substance.

But most six measures of meal that he yearly payed
to the Abbey

For the fare of a priest who should pray for the soul
of his friend and companion

Robert the Brus, hold fast to our love as the root of
a friendship

Struck in the soil of the past, whose stem and whose
branches, outspreading,

Sheltered and saved from the south our ancient
freedom of Scotland.

But a year from the death of the Brus lay Walter the
Stewart adying,

And he stretched forth his hands to his own, with a
father's last benediction

Unto his daughters three and his five sons, children
of Bice.

Thus were the daughters' hight as they merged in the
lives of their husbands :

Lennox's Earl Malduin chose the eldest, Elizabeth,
Countess ;

Patrick Earl of Dunbar wedded Christian, Niel Earl
of Carrick

Margaret whose daughter and heir was Marjory
Countess of Carrick

Wedded to Robert de Brus, Lord of Annandale, father
of Robert,

First King of Scots. Of the sons, Alexander the first-
born succeeded,

Lord High Stewart of the realm, and of him be the
song that's acoming.

Alexander

4TH LORD HIGH STEWART. 1246-1283

and James

5TH LORD HIGH STEWART. 1243-1309

KERRERA'S isle is ringed around
With rocks for sentinel,
And voices of ocean waves resound,
As they toll a Scots king's knell.
Lo! the Lord of the Isles laughed loud for cheer
When he knew Alexander dead :
And "The point of the royal tyrant's spear
Splits on our rocks," he said.
Dead is a king, but a king is born,
Bears Alexander's name,
And on Scotland rises the fair spring morn
Of Alexander's fame.
Mantled and sceptred, crowned, the boy
Sits on the ancient stone
And the Lords and the people shout for joy
As he rises their king at Scone.
In a robe of scarlet standing there
By the Stone of Destiny,
Hark to the Highland bard declare
His Trojan pedigree.
Ay the Scots lords hearkened as he told,
And proud their hearts did beat

As they kneeled and threw their robes of gold
 Beneath their boy king's feet.
Now Henry of England would fare forth
 To the war of the Holy Land,
But first he will wed the south and the north
 With a little hand in a hand.
Northward to York on Christ his day,
Southward to York they came,
The flower of England's bright array,
The flower of Scotland's name.
Henry the king, Alexander the king,
 The Princess Margaret,
And the Mother Queens they held the ring
 On childhood's finger set.
A thousand knights in robes of silk
 Guarded fair England's child,
As from her palfrey white as milk
 Ten fairy summers smiled.
Child upon child she smiled and craved
 Through a forest of lance and spear ;
Ay, and her tiny hand she waved
 When she spied her playmate near.
Together beneath the sounding dome
 They kneeled as the Bishop read
Long words from a jewelled Latin tome
 And the royal babes were wed.
Feasting and mirth and wassail bowl
 Round York's Cathedral spire,
Six hundred oxen roasted whole
 By the Archbishop's fire !
Tumbled the tumblers, minstrels plied
 Their chief of minstrelsy,

Saxon and Scot and Norman vied
In love and amity,
And the King and the Queen of Scotland made
Brave revel with royal toy,
While the bells rang forth and the priests they prayed,
And the Christ was born in joy.

On the morrow the Scots king bowed before
Henry his child queen's sire,
And for his lands in England swore
Such homage as lands require.
Then the artful Henry stooped him down,
As he whispered a little ear,
And the Scots crown and the English crown,
Perdie ! they came right near.
But the King of Scots made answer straight
In his boyish treble true :
“ For the English lands of Scotland's state
I have done homage due ;
But for my Scotland, homage none
Will I now nor never pay,
Till wiser heads than my wee one
Give counsel to obey.”
Henry must swallow down his rage,
As he closes with a smile
The door of that wee Scots birdie's cage
Who hath sae muckle guile.

.
Ho ! for the beat of Crusaders' blood :
Ha ! for St Louis of France :
Ho ! for the battle-axe's thud :
Ha ! for the thrust of the lance :

Ho ! for the Crescent and Ha ! for the Cross :
Ho ! for great Saladin :
Come wounds, come death, who counts that loss,
Which the gates of heaven can win ?
O'er sea and o'er land from the Holy War
Pass the Stewart and his brethren twain,
But they leave the grave of the Earl of Dunbar,
New-dug on the Syrian plain,
Now first of the Stewart's thoughts, I ween,
As he came o'er the Border
Was " Where be the King and the pearly Queen
That I may watch and ward her ? "
He sought them high and he sought them low,
In the Forest of Jedburgh found them,
In the hands of a friend or the hands of a foe,
For the Comyns were all around them.
Now the Comyn of the north hath Earldoms three
And three and thirty knights,
All of his name, and none there be
Equal with Comyn fights.
None said I ? Nay ! his Countess fair
Who loves an English lord,
She hath given him a cup of poison there,
Slays better than a sword.
Over the laws and the swords is love,
But vengeance is swift and sure,
And the sins of love must be payed above
What the joys of love procure.
Deep in the dungeon's darkness lie
These lovers in their ruin ;
But the Love God laughs, ay, hear him cry :
" I have broke the power of the Comyn."

John de Balliol and Robert de Ross,
 These were the Regent Lords ;
But the names of the new are the Stewart and the Brus,
 These be sufficing words.
Now Henry of England fain would fold
 In his arms his Margaret,
And parley with Alexander hold,
 In whose crown this pearl is set.
Fain would the Scots king wield his power
 O'er his Honour of Huntingdon,
And fain would he see the Scots queen's dower
 Gild the trappings of her pillion.
So forth fares the king, with his brave array,
 And the Stewart at his side,
But the queen will linger on her way,
 With the Bishop of Glasco ride ;
Ay, slowly slow she passeth south,
 Wan is her bonny face,
And pale the red rose of her mouth
 As she falls in her sire's embrace.
Right soon the bells of Windsor ring
 And the neighbour flags unfurl,
And the old king loves the young Scots king,
 Whose Pearl hath now her Pearl.
But short their time of joyance was,
 And brief their sojourning,
For word came from the Earl of Ross
 That the Raven was on the wing.

Battle of Largs

AT midsummer from Herlover
Sails for the Orcades
The Norsemen's fleet and everywhere
The sun vies with the breeze,
As though together they conspire
To bless them on their way ;
Not the Isles alone, but the land entire,
They offer them for a prey ;
For the sun glints on their coats of mail
And the western breeze makes light
The oars of the galleys that they sail
As by enchanter's might.
In the first where the golden dragons hiss,
Stands Haco at the prow,
And the spray flies up as though 'twould kiss
The King o' Norroway's brow.
Haco the king, no youth is he,
But his een shine blue and clear
And stout his arm for mastery
That hath ruled full many a year.
An hundred and fifty sail they glide,
Like a serpent of old ocean,
Risen from the depths where he doth bide,
But now in awful motion ;
An hundred and fifty sail they glide
O'er the waves with sunlight paven,

And now at even, see them ride
Safe in Orcadian haven.
The morning dawns on Ronaldsvoe,
And the sun climbs up the sky ;
But lo ! But lo ! what weird of woe
Blinds thus his golden eye ?
For a curtain covereth up his face,
Till only a ring is bright :
The Norsemen kneel and pray for grace
At midday in midnight.
Perchance their prayers are heard, perchance
'Twere better for most to die
With a stainless sword and a couchant lance,
And their hands clasped to the sky !

Sunlight again ! and the king makes mirth
With Magnus the dutiful,
As they sail to the Lewes by the Pentland Firth,
Then hold for the Sound of Mull.
Magnus of Man and Dugal Sire
Of the foam-kissed Hebrides,
He bids them reive the Mull of Kintire :
This makes them muckle ease.

.
Now as Haco the king in Gigha lay,
John of the Isles drew near,
Bowed to the King of Norroway,
Would whisper in his ear.
“ Speak loud,” cried Haco, “ lest the waves
That break upon this isle
Bury thy whispers in their graves :
Here is nor fear nor guile.”

Then John spake forth : “ Thy man was I
Faithful and leal and true,
For the King of Scots I did defy,
Till the old king was the new.
But now I yield thee back those lands
Thou gavest me of yore
And crave a pardon at thy hands
Whom I dare not follow more.
For of the Young King lands I hold,
Oxen and sheep in fee,
But more than a thousand sheep in fold
Is one dear head to me ;
My son lies in Dunfermline town
An hostage to the Scot
And the sword once drawn for thee cuts down
What cut can be garnered not.”

Then Haco mused and his Viking Lords
Half-circle stood around ;
Their mail-clad hands did grip their swords,
But the wind their locks unwound.
Haco made answer : “ John o’ the Isles
Thou art my liegeman, born,
But I have known a wee bairn’s smiles,
Like the face of the rosy morn ;
And for I wot thy son must die,
Thy sword once drawn for me .
Behold ! Thy king no more am I :
John o’ the Isles is free !
And the armoured Norsemen stood amazed
When the royal speech they heard,

But thinking on their sons they praised
The royal heart-strings stirred.
Down on his knees fell John o' the Isles,
Would kiss King Haco's hand,
But he raised him up with gracious smiles,
Bade him "God speed" from the strand.

.
Now when Magnus and Dugal backward wound
From the reiving of Kintire ;
By the Firth of Clyde to Kilbrennan's sound
They bare the sword and the fire.
Carrick and Kyle and Wigtown quailed
As the Norsemen's fleet went by,
And the Barefoot Friars to Haco sailed,
For peaceful pact to try.
But the Norseman claimed the Cumrays twain,
Arran and Bute and Clyde,
With the Hebrides—such terms were vain—
And the battle must decide.

.
Well are Loch Lomond's waters met,
Clipt in the land's embrace !
Welcome the islands jewel-set
Upon her crystal face !
Hither from fenceless shores of Clyde
Fled the Scot with wife and child,
By the waves land-bound on every side
To a Paradise beguiled.
The sun had dropped into the west,
His conqueror's ruddy shield,

Those breathing islets were at rest,
At rest the mainland field ;
When of a sudden voices brake
The silence of the shore ;
An unknown, outland tongue they spake,
They gathered more and more.
In sixty boats those voices crept
Forth on Loch Lomond's water,
While still serene the Scotsmen slept,
Like sheep foredoomed to slaughter.

Whispers no more, but fearsome yells,
Pierce the silence of the night,
And the twenty isles are as twenty hells,
Where a thousand demons fight.
Woman and bairn the Norseman slew,
From gentle slumbers riven,
But many a tiny bairn ne'er knew
Why it woke with wings in heaven.
How came the Norseman's craft to sail
Over the Tarbet lands ?
With the breath of a thousand lungs for gale,
With the oars of a thousand hands.
Thus was their goblet of success
Filled full of blood for wine,
But the fates from their vats of sorrow press
Thy woe as well as mine.
For as those Norsemen backward passed
To their ships in the Loch of Long,
The hail and the rain and the furious blast
Wreaked vengeance on the strong :

Ten mighty galleys, ten score men
 Whelmed in the ravenous waves !
Then the ocean rested, but to gain
 Fresh food for its floating graves.
Dire powers that wait upon the wand
 Of the enchanter's will,
These hurled the Norsemen on the strand,
 And the tempest ragèd still,
And heathen Haco, when he felt
 That this enchantment was
Passed to the Cumrays, prayed and knelt
 Before the Christian Cross ;
As though the Christ our Lord would fight
 For the heathen reivers' sake !
Lo ! as he knelt, within his sight
 His seven anchors brake,
And the royal galley slid away
 And others were hurled ashore,
And the lave they drave right furiously
 Toward Largs 'mid the tempests' roar.
Beacons and eyes from cliff and bent
 Down glared as the fleet surged by,
At strife with the raging element,
 And the Scots blest their ally.
But when they saw those galleys hurled
 On the spumy rocks of Clyde
Down like the tempest's self they whirled :
 Death grapples in the tide !
Night fell, but on the morrow morn
 Through the surf grim warriors waded
And the Norsemen's valour was reborn,
 Came Haco's self to aid it.

Upsprings the sun, the days' begun,
And the flashing of his rays
Makes joy the Norsemen every one ;
Less joyous as it plays
On the steel of Scotland's main array
That like the sun obscured
Bursts through the cloud-racks of delay,
With the king and his Lord High Stewart,
And fifteen hundred men at arms,
All mail-clad cap-a-pie,
Gathered from peels and burgs and farms,
A lusty company.
Mounted upon their mail-clad steeds,
See them gallop to the charge,
Each king his foremost battle leads,
But we force them to the marge.
The Lord High Stewart on the right,
On the left his brother Walter,
Both hurl them back and then unite
When they see the Norsemen falter.
Vainly they signal to their ships,
No succour can come ashore,
For again the storm its leashes slips,
As the hounds of hell its roar.
They battle on the banks of Clyde,
Scot, storm, and gallant Norsemen ;
Forth from our vanguard see him ride
Yon golden armoured horseman.
Sir Piers de Curry is he hight,
Bravest of Scotland's scions,
Forward he pricks to single fight :
Defiance meets defiance ;

For a mighty Norseman turns about
And a twin-edged sword he swings,
And each crieth out his battle shout,
As Norse upon Scots steel rings.
Parry and stroke and stroke again,
And the battle stays to see
Which side of the strenuous clashing twain
Will fall the victory.
Half-circle back, like the lightning flash,
The Norseman swings his sword,
Then forward with an awful crash ;
He breaks the Scotsman's ward,
Cleaveth the steely cuisse and bone
As these were empty air,
Down from his steed the Scotsman thrown
Must bite the wet sand there.
On his curious armour, gold-inwrought,
Swoop down the ravenous Norse,
And the battle joins and the battle's fought
Around the hero's corse.
Perdie ! the Norsemen payed right dear
Sir Piers his cloven thigh,
And methinks his spirit made good cheer,
So be it floated nigh :
Five yarls that led the Norsemen on,
King Haco's brother's bairn,
And ten score more piled high upon
Sir Piers to build his cairn !
Battle upon the beach till night,
Upon the blood-red hill,
On Clyde the wave and the tempest smite
The foes of Scotland still.

Driven from their anchors hurled ashore,
 One on the other dashing,
Nightlong amid the tempest's roar
 We heard their galleys crashing.
At dawn the rocks of Clyde are fed
 With corpses, masts and ropes,
And for the burial of their dead,
 For the burial of their hopes
A truce the stormy Norsemen crave,
 And one by one another
They range stone sentries for their brave,
 Whom time nor tide can smother,
For ye shall see them standing yet,
 Ye shall hear them tell their tale
Of the brave whom all but they forget
 With the voice of the northern gale.
Their duty done unto the dead
 Northward the Norsemen passed,
Bowed was King Haco's sovran head,
 As he leaned upon the mast.
Arran and Bute and Skye he saw
 Frown through their mist and rain ;
Of the Western Isles where he was law
 Harbour he sought in vain.
Onward unto the Orcades.
 He sought for friendly earth,
But the wrath unappeased of the winds and the seas
 Oped the jaws of the Pentland Firth.
One galley and three score souls gulped down,
 By a miracle saved the king,
Now ashore he may rest his storm-struck crown
 And his fleet of weary wing.

(An hundred and fifty sail they passed
O'er the waves with sunlight paven ;
Now the Scot and the sea and the ravenous blast
Spare ten for Orcadian haven).
Heavy on hill and valley shed
Lay drear December snows,
And heavy upon King Haco's head
The winter of his woes.
Now some would pass to Norrøway
Back o'er the heaving billow :
To these King Haco bowed his " Yea,"
With weary head on pillow.
But most they stood around his couch,
For to them he was full dear,
And gallantly they did avouch
To make their monarch cheer,
That with the coming of the spring
Over the seas again
A mightier fleet its way should wing
Free of enchantment's chain.
Well spoken ! warrior hearts so true,
Blessed be your loyal lie ;
What matter though you and he well knew
That the end of all was nigh ?
Then to the royal chamber came
Full many a monk and priest,
And they promised much in Jesus' name
Once the soul from the flesh released.
But Haco wearied of their prayers,
Wearied of all they told
Of the Christ and his Virgin Mother's cares,
And the saints in their crowns of gold.

For the days of his youth came back again
 And he called for the history
 Of the Pirate Kings that swept the main,
 His royal ancestry.
 And as they read his een shone bright
 And he rose on his couch as though
 He would brace himself to one last fight,
 With death itself for foe.
 Full soon his head fell back once more
 And his spirit passed away,
 And with it passed for evermore
 The peril of Norroway.

.
 Of the clashing of arms and seas, a truce !
 Let the Muse of gentle voice
 Tell the tale of the son of Robert de Brus
 And the Countess of Carrick's choice.
 It chanced within a leafy space
 Of her forest of Turnberry
 That the Countess following the chase
 Saw the Brus as he cantered free.
 " Fair knight wilt thou not ride with me,
 Follow the deer a mile,
 Albeit thou farest hastily ? "
 Like a rosebud oped her smile.
 " Fair Countess," answered Robert de Brus,
 As he reined in his steed,
 " Right fain were I, but weighty news
 I bear with most of speed."
 Thus answered Brus, for well he knew
 That the Countess was Royal ward,

Albeit her beauty pierced him through
And her eyes were a twin-edged sword.
The Countess laughed as she turned about
In her saddle of cramoisie ;
(In the sun her golden curls shone out,
A lovely sight to see.)
She beckoned to her men at arms :
See they are at her side
To guard their Countess from the harms
That the beauteous love betide !
“ Go gather ye round yon feckless knight
Who doth unbidden dare
Pass through my forest in my sight :
He is my prisoner.”
Hardly her words are flown but lo !
As a stag when the chase is done,
Ten men are at Brus’ saddle-bow
With a drawn sword every one.
“ Now by St James,” cries Robert de Brus,
And he laughs right merrily,
“ Such a bidding brooketh not excuse,
I must e’en ride with thee.”
“ Yea, that must thou, the Countess cries,
As she grips his hanging rein,
And the Brus as he looks into her eyes
Is twice a prisoner ta’en.
She leads him by the shadowy glades,
By the laughter of Girvan water,
Till the laughter of her bonny maids
Greets the Earl of Carrick’s daughter.
Turnberry’s walls are builded high,
Turnberry’s moat is deep,

Turnberry's dungeon lieth nigh
Turnberry's inner keep.
Ah ! what will now the Brus betide,
Chained to a golden girdle ?
On the sixteenth morn a lovely bride
To make his bonds eternal.
Now when on the wings of fame this news
Had flown unto the king,
How the Countess ward was wed to the Brus,
Nor craved his vouchsafing ;
O ! then waxed Alexander's ire,
And from the twain he reft
Castle and lordship of her sire,
But the better part he left.
For what avails the wrath of kings
When hearts and hands unite ?
To the Brus' neck his true wife clings,
And her tearful eyes swim bright.
The Brus hath called his trusty friends
And the kinsmen of his house :
Valour to these and parley lends
The beauty of his spouse.
They kneel before their ireful king,
And a cloud hangs o'er his brow,
Though suppliant gifts and prayers they bring
And many a duteous vow
From the Countess and the Lord she took
All in her forest green :
" Not twice I could upon him look,
Ere love was come between ;
I seized him with my men at arms,
For Love himself seized me ;

Though reason pealed full loud alarms,
Love would not we were free.
Therefore I pray thee, good my liege,
Pardon thy suppliant ward
Whom love himself did thus besiege
And thrust within her guard.
Pardon thy Countess and thine Earl,
Whom love hath made but one :
Oh ! if she plead our cause thy Pearl,
Then is our pardon won.”
Thus spake she by her friends and gifts
Laid before king and queen,
Who pleads till the royal cloud-rack lifts
And Scotland's sky 's serene.
Turnberry Castle 's hers once more,
Turnberry's forest glade,
Where a Bruce was taken in love's war
And an Earl of Carrick made.
Happily lived the twain methinks
A lover's year together,
They followed the chase by Girvan's brinks
In the pleasant summer weather.
Come wintry snows and blasts so keen
(Yet the spring dwells with the spruce)
She bears him a bairn, our Evergreen,
(For the spring 's with Robert Brus).
He wrenched King Edward's iron grip
From the throat of his native land,
And his fame will bloom on Scotland's lip
While the hills of Scotland stand,
And for this tale of Turnberry Tower
Let this be full excuse

That a lovely lady left her bower
To be mother of Robert Brus.

.

Now when Henry of England's days were o'er
Sat Edward on the throne,
Came the King of Scots to swear once more
For his English fiefs alone
But seeing how great a prince was he
Ruling a sovran state,
He held it meet that the Brus should be
His spokesman delegate.
Therefore the Brus thus swore the oath
While the neighbour kings stood by,
And the Lords of the neighbour kingdoms both
Caught the words as they did fly !
" I Robert Earl of Carrick swear
On the King of Scots, his soul,
Faith to King Edward and his heir
With life and worldly whole,
And I will faithful keep these bands,
Service of use and wont,
Against all deadly, for the lands
Which of England's king I hold."
Thus much did Alexander swear,
Thus kept he Scotland free,
And the record it is written fair
For all true men to see.

.

Now of the Stewart's death I tell
Who bare his master's name

Which at the dolorous time befell
 When to Scotland home they came.
This song has seen him fight the Norse
 Whom storm and ocean swallowed
And in council Alexander's course
 King Alexander followed.
To Paisley Abbey store of gold
 Gave the Stewart and first fruit
Of the lands that he and his spouse did hold,
 Whose dower was the Isle of Bute.
Two sons bore Jean the heiress : James
 And John Stewart of Bonkyl,
Brethren whose deeds and glittering names.
 The page of history fill,
Fifth Lord High Stewart was the first,
 The second at Falkirk fell,
But how sorrow's cloud o'er Scotland burst
 Behold the Muse would tell.
So the king must mourn for Margaret,
 That pearly queen of his,
And he must mourn another yet,
 Likewise a Pearl, I wis :
Queen Margaret of Norroway,
 His daughter dear she was,
And his son and heir, on his heart these lay
 Like the arms of a triple cross.
One only child that daughter bare,
 A little maid was she,
Whom the Maid of Norroway some declare,
 But the Damsel of Scotland we.
Her little feet alone did stand
 On the steps of Scotland's throne ;

Save her, by the dealing of Death's hand,
Alexander stood alone.
Wherefore he chose a queen anew,
Should breed a kingly race :
Joletta, child of the Count de Dreux ;
As the lily bloomed her face.
Sorrow he banished for the weal
Of Scotland and her crown,
And he bade his lords and his people leal
To the feast in Jedburgh town.
Ale for the people, wine for lords,
For all men games and glee,
As in Jedburgh's Palace creak the boards
While the dance they foot it free.
See the king lead forth his lissom bride,
Her lilies turn to roses
As in and out and in they glide
Till the music sudden closes.
" Oh ! What can ail my minstrels now
That sudden cease their playing ? "
Cries the king and turns an angry brow
To know their cause for staying.
Then soon the music plays again
At the order of the king,
Though on every face are fear and pain,
For all have seen the Thing.
Yea, all have seen that griesly form
Save one whom all obey
And they dance like dead leaves in the storm
For they know the king is fey ¹

¹ Fey=foredoomed to death—Scots.

Dead lilies in Joletta's face,
 Deep sobs and tears around,
She moves with the king a little space,
 Then falleth in a swoond.
Now what beheld those revellers ?
 What was that griesly Thing
That turned their joys to awesome fears
 Like pestilence in spring ?
A ghastly shape in mist arrayed,
 A Death's-head in a Crown,
Unto the minstrel's measure swayed
 Moved ever up and down ;
Now slowly passed, now horrid fast,
 For it danced with the music's tones,
And where it passed an icy blast
 Froze the marrow of their bones.
None marked it come, none marked it go,
 No earthly way it went,
But all men know that looming woe
 That griesly dancer meant.
Now harken how the weird ¹ was wrought
 And the ancient line had end,
Then hear how England's Edward sought
 To chain the hand of a friend.
The sennight ² 'twas, the bare sennight
 Since the spectre danced its rede,
Alexander in the waning light
 Did mount his fiery steed.
To Inverkeithing he would fare,
 But as they passed Kinghorn

¹ Weird = prediction—Scots.

² Seventh night.

The Stewart prayed him have a care,
And ride the morrow morn.
But fiery as his plunging beast
Was Scotland's fated king
And the voice and the spur the pace increased,
As the deer's his courser's spring.
Black rocks they started up around
And on their left the sea
Boomed with a deep and dolorous sound,
As big with destiny.
Full soon upon his headlong course
Galloped the king alone,
For the Stewart vainly urged his horse
O'er sand and sliding stone.
At a turn in the road a massy rock
Hid the king from the Stewart's view
And as he galloped o'er stone and stock
His heart it galloped too.
The rock! the rock! he reached and passed,
He saw the dead king lie
The King of Scots, the best, the last,
With his face to the stormy sky.
His foamy steed was at his side,
The booming waves made moan,
The whirling sea-birds shrieking cried :
" Empty is Scotland's throne."
The Stewart knelt beside the corse,
He staunched the lifeblood's spring
That trickled from its crimson source
In the forehead of the king.
That night Joletta laughed aloud,
When all her loss she knew,

And "Methinks," she cried, "a single shroud
Sufficeth for us two.
Come, friends, we'll dance again once more
In the shadow of the moon ;
I would meet the griesly form we saw,
I would crave of him a boon :
This only, that I be allowed
To lie with the king my lord,
Together wound in the self-same shroud,
Beneath the coffin's board."
Thus raved the poor Scots queen that night,
Thus lived for many a day,
A beauteous, silly, harmless wight
Till she heard sweet music play.
Then ever to her feet she sprung
And wildly gazed around,
Then wept and then her hands she wrung,
Fell raving to the ground.
A silly soul, but when she died
Her bidding they obeyed,
And by King Alexander's side
Joletta queen they laid.

Death of the Maid of Norroway

NOW weep for the north and tear
Thy heavy coiled hair,
O Muse and thy weed of woe
Be the hail and the snow

Of the northern island where
Lies the damsel so fair,
Like a white windblown plume
Blown to her dark doom
Over northern, rolling billow.
Her head's on her pillow;
Last of her royal race,
She hath death in her face.
See her stretch forth her hand
To her country's strand,
But never she'll reach it
And never will sit
On the Stone of Destiny,
Maiden of History!
O thou, Maiden of Norroway,
Memory far away!
O thou, Damsel of Scotland,
Edward of England
Had been thy royal child spouse
And those unsaid vows
Perchance had linked the fates
Of the Sister States!

Death of the Maid of Norroway 51

But alas and a lack-a-day,
Maiden of Norroway,
With thy passing words are said,
Scotland's freedom's dead !
By the mouth of Edward's minions
War's red pinions
On the Border Tweed unfurl :
But sleep, gentle girl,
For behold thy sleep's secured,
Thy faithful Stewart
James, who swore troth to thee,
Sad perplexity
Drives him hither and thither,
Muse tell me whither.
For the Damsel of Scotland dead,
Muse, let thy tears be shed.

James

FIFTH LORD HIGH STEWART. 1243-1309 (*continued*)

BY Norham on the banks of Tweed,
When summer winds were sighing,
Upon a green and flowery mead
Our freedom lay adying.
Now I will tell ye, ladies fair,
How this was brought to be,
But of the Stewart first declare
The infelicity.

.

When Alexander died the Stewart was one of six
great lords
By whom the Maiden's rightful throne was fenced
about with swords ;
But how the Maid did fade away like snowdrop
with the snow,
Behold the Muse hath duly told and crooned the
dirge of woe.
Now of these lords some died full soon and Duncan
Earl of Fife
By Sir William Abernethy was slain in bloody strife.
Therefore the Stewart made a band to crown the
Brus our King,
And these are the names of the lords that signed and
sealed it each with his ring :

Brus Lord of Annandale stood first whose son was
Carrick's Earl,

By the right of flashing eyes of blue and locks of golden
curl,

Patrick the Earl and his three sons that lord it in
Dunbar,

Cousins of the Stewart and his brother John of
Bonkyl whose red star

Set on the field of Falkirk, and Walter of Menteith,

The Earl his uncle with his sons, all set their names
beneath

This band of James the Lord High Stewart at the
Castle of Turnberry.

But mightier than many lords is the hand of destiny.

Destiny, name for most of might, loves best the throne
of kings,

And from the empty Scottish throne behold her flight
she wings

Unto King Edward of England, who knows full well
to wait,

For he never strikes a blow too soon nor never strikes
too late.

When the Scots estates at Brigham had made their
due award,

And by bethrothal of their Maid to the king's son
sheathed the sword,

King Edward sware upon his soul that the kingdom
of Scotland ever

As of old from the kingdom of England the Border's
line should sever,

Sware that if Margaret and his son should die without
an heir

Then should the States of Scotland their rightful king
declare.
To swear these oaths he stretched his arms from
England o'er the banks
Of Tweed and after them he drew those striding
lengthy shanks,
The bane of Scotland, for they strode north, south
and east and west,
And the hounds of war were at his heels and in his
hands the pest.
These were the gifts he gave the land whose laws he
swore to keep,
But crooked were his ways of thought and as the
ocean deep.
When the Snowdrop Queen was faded quite, he called
his lords together
And whispered in their privy ear how he had mind
to tether
The kingdom of Scotland with the chain whereof the
Welshmen feel
About their bodies and their souls the biting links of
steel.
He whispered in their privy ear and bade his armies
meet
By Norham on the banks of Tweed, for he would
Scotland greet
With the persuasion of the bow, the eloquence of the
sword
To bow the knee to England's king as Scotland's
Overlord.
This done, a message Edward sent unto the Scottish
State

That he would meet their lords and priests at Norham
for debate.

It fell upon the ten of May that Scots and English met,
And in Roger Brabazon his mouth these words King
Edward set :

“ Whereas what time the King of Scots, Alexander,
passed to heaven,

He of his body left no heir, and now your Maid is riven
By death from out my dear son’s arms and now your
land is torn

By civil feud and herschip right grievous to be borne,
I have summoned ye my Scottish Lords who am
Lord Paramount

Of Scotland that of all these things we may take due
account.

Now first I bid your hearty ‘ ay ’ to this my claim
most just,

Next for the settling of your crown in me ye shall
have trust ! ”

Amazement fell upon the Scots when now they heard
this claim.

They answered : “ Sire, we know not well what
means this lofty name,

Lord Paramount of Scotland, name never heard before,
Therefore since now, no king we have, we may not
answer more ! ”

“ By Holy Edward,” Edward cried, “ whose crown is
on my brow,

I will perish teaching ye my right or my right ye
shall avow.”

The Scots lords trembled as they heard, for in their
hearts was fear

Since they had none to lead nor fight and they knew
his army near ;
Therefore they begged a brief delay that they might
well devise
The best to do for Scotland's sake. Now this in
Edward's eyes
Seemed good to grant, for well he knew that the glint
of English gold
In the Regent Bishop Frazer's eyes was worth his
country sold,
And that meanwhile o'er the Border a golden stream
would pour,
Winning the hearts corrupt of some, weakening the
hearts of more.
The Scots and the English parted there to meet the
coming moon
On the daisied sward by Norham, beneath the skies
of June.
Now nought will I soften for those Scots who are
about to sell
The freedom of their native land, for the truth alone
I tell.
Yet this for Scotland as a whole may be justly counter-
claimed,
That certain only lords had power, and these the whole
land shamed.
Eight claimant lords, the Regents—and the Stewart
was with the Brus—
These meet King Edward at Norham and of these
none dare refuse
To Edward the King the sovran right to Scotland's
seignory,

And to whom he shall award their land they swear
their King shall be.

Black Comyn Lord of Badenoch, he is the first to sign,
Balliol and Brus and other five in a descending line.

Then the Regents four of Scotland, the Comyn and
the Bishops twain

Of Glasgow and of St Andrews, and the Stewart with
most of pain,

Deliver up their native land to the English king to hold
And the choosing of their country's king by him to be
controlled.

One only lord denies to yield the castles in his power
And fit it is his name should shine through Scotland's
darkest hour.

He is the Earl of Angus, Gilbert de Umfraville,
Dundee's and Forfar's castellan, who holds those keys
until

By order of the Scots Estates wherefrom he took his
Trust

He yields what Scotland wills to yield but not what
Scotland must.

This done King Edward mounts his steed and passes
o'er the Border

Exacting homage from the Scots and bringing all to
order.

Such order as to a fenceless man an armed man can
bring

Was the order brought to Scotland with the passage
of England's king.

By Edinburgh and Dunfermline he fares to northern
Perth,

By Kinghorn and Linlithgow beyond the eastern Firth ;

St Andrews bows her mitred head, earls, barons and
burghers all

Sign the rolls of homage to Edward which makes
them England's thrall.

When now the progress is fulfilled at Berwick-upon-
Tweed

King Edward calls the delegates to meet as he decreed
In the church of the monks of Dominic : an hundred
and four they come

Of Scots and English artful mixed ; but Scotland's
voice is dumb.

Now these be the names of the lords that claimed to
mount our Scotland's throne,

Eight at the first through Edward's art by five is
their number grown,

For the more the number of claimants the greater
King Edward stands,

Lord Paramount of Scotland with the balance in his
hands.

Florence the Fifth of Holland ranks first, the
Emperor's son,

Whose veins with the blood patrician of ancient
Romans run.

A Roman by the Emperor, by the Empress born a
Guelf,

But a pirate Norseman seemed to him Plantagenet
himself.

Ada daughter of Henry, son of David, Scotland's king
Is the ancestress whence Florence Count of Holland's
titles spring ;

For Ada wedded Florence Count of Holland, great
grandsire

Of the Count around whose father's head wheeled
the eagles of Empire.

Sister of William the Lion no claim her heirs should
make,

Since the heirs of her brother the Lion are first for
royal birthright's sake.

But hearken to the man of law who pleads at Florence'
side :

“ No claim have Balliol nor the Brus whose blood
a tainted tide

Flows from King David of Scotland, who with banner
high displayed

Did the lands of the King of England his overlord
invade.

For this he was a felon and furthermore the crown
In favour of William the Lion Earl David laid it down,
Ruling in place the Garioch, where ruled his daughters
three,

And Balliol, Brus and Hastynges heirs of their bodies
be.”

Next on the roll of those that claim stands Patric
Earl of March,

Whose titles span the stormy sky as doth the showery
arch :

Fair, but they vanish : Patric claims by a daughter
of William the Lion's,

And a like claim makes de Vesci's lord, with William
de Ros as scions

All of that king ; for ancestress the Princess Marjorie,
Daughter of Henry, Scotland's Prince, claims Robert
de Pinkeny.

Through the second Alexander claims Nicolas de Soulis,

Patric Galithly followeth next with equal parchment
rolls.

Descent from Aufrica the child of William King of Scots
Proves Roger de Mandeville for eighth : full well King
Edward wots

That as the arch upon the sky, so these their lineage
show,

But to deck the heaven where rules his orb with their
many-coloured bow.

Black Comyn Lord of Badenoch is next to claim the
crown

Whose sires could trace from Donald Bane their right
and lordship down ;

He is father to that Red Comyn whom Robert the
Brus shall slay

In the Friars' chapel by Dumfries upon a winter's day.
Tenth is Sir John de Hastynges whose grandsire was
that Earl

David of Huntingdon whose flag erewhile we saw un-
furl

With the Stewart's in the Holy War.

Now see a crownèd king

Who would link a crown unto a crown with the hoop
of a nuptial ring :

Eric the King of Norroway would mount our Scotland's
throne

By the right of his Damsel Daughter dead whom all
the Muses moan.

Ten lords and a king till now have claimed their dole
at the hand of time,

Their dole they have, and let them preen their plumes
in the glass of rhyme.

But leaning upon the arm of Time comes Truth, whose
 radiant face
Though never so late to the feast she come hath aye
 the foremost place.
At her side behold two lords that claim, John Balliol
 and Robert de Brus,
Betwixt the running of their blood is the real choice
 to choose.
For of the others that have claimed, some fail through
 bastardy,
Some by remoteness of descent, though fair their
 pedigree.
From the daughters of David of Huntingdon, brother
 of William, Scotland's King,
Uncle to Alexander Second, both Brus and Balliol
 spring.
By the eldest, Margaret, Balliol claims, by the second,
 Isabel,
Robert the Brus, whose own mother she was, and
 claims as well
By the speech of Alexander Second, who before he
 got an heir,
Thinking to leave no child of his, did in default declare
Robert the Brus his cousin's child, but as all men
 know his bride
Of the second bed the Coucy bare a sole son ere he
 died,
Alexander Third of Scotland, whose grandchild, Norro-
 way's Maid,
Last of the royal line men saw as frozen snowdrop fade.
Now nearer by one degree is Brus than the grandson
 of Margaret,

Balliol, against whose claim to rule is another barrier
set :

To wit that a woman by her sex is incapable to reign,
And Dervorgulla, Balliol's mother, this proved, who
did refrain

To claim the crown when died the King : thus the
Brus as nighest male

Of the royal blood must lawfully in this debate prevail.
Thus spake the Brus, but straight upsprung John
Balliol and he pled

That seeing the dead King left an heir was born in
lawful bed,

Vain was the plea against the rule of woman and
furthermore—

Should that be false, then Brus himself sets a barrier
before

The claims of Brus and adds thereto that the Brus by
his own act

Swearing allegiance to the Maid, pierced phantom
pleas with fact.

Thus pleaded Balliol and the Brus, each straining to
the goal,

Adding as is the pleaders' wont much dross unto the
whole

Of justice in their claims to rule that might weigh
down the scale

Quivering upon that winter's day in Edward's fist
of mail.

King Edward called those delegates and asked them
questions twain,

And as the echo of Edward's voice their answers
came again.

Now first : “ Of the heirs of the sisters Margaret and Isabel,

If the crown to the elder more remote or the nearer younger fell ? ”

They answered : “ To the elder’s heirs though by one degree remote ” :

King Balliol smiled the smile of kings, but the Brus clutched Brus’ throat.

Second : “ Can the realm of Scotland be into parts divided ? ”

“ Not partible is Scotland’s realm,” that echo’s voice decided.

On the seventeen of November, at Berwick-upon-Tweed

King Edward met the Courts again, and as the clam-bering weed

Dies when the castle ’s builded new, so died those claimants’ claims

That decked the ruins of the past with the blossoms of their names.

King Edward rising from his throne delivered his decree :

That one is the kingdom of Scotland, but of England held in fee,

And by the laws of England to the heirs of the elder line

Must the heirs of the younger though more near their claim to rule resign.

Therefore to Balliol comes the crown, by grace of his overlord

Edward the King of England, who doth this throne accord

Unto his vassal Balliol, saving the right to reign,
Which shall with the King of England and with his
heirs remain.

Thus to our fenceless Scotland, Lord Paramount he
spake,

And the seal of the Lion of Scotland in parties four
he brake

Before the eyes of Balliol, before the eyes of Brus,
And the portals of the Stewart's eyes flowed as an
opened sluice.

Next day, in the Castle of Norham, sware Balliol
fealty

Unto King Edward of England, and the Stone of
Destiny

Shuddered as Balliol sat thereon, shuddered the free
Scots crown

From King of Scots to King of Scots through ages
handed down.

Reign of Balliol

1292-1305

JAMES, 5TH LORD HIGH STEWART (*continued*)

BATS that waver in your flight,
Quivering through the dim twilight;
Owls and ghosts that may not rest,
Hearken unto my behest :

Issue from your secret bowers,
Ivied turrets, haunted towers,
Flitter through this grieslie age,
Write with claws this blenchèd page,
Fright with shrieks of murdered men
All that stay to look again,
Thus ye shall with pleasant labour
Do for me a dire endeavour,
Seeing the Muse wills not to sing
The sorrows of a craven King.

Balliol sits on Scotland's throne,
Edward rules the land alone,
Edward with an iron mace
Brandished in his vassal's face
Bids him bow down on bended knee :
" Scotland is but England's fee."
" But the oaths ye sware the Scot ? "
" Sware I oaths ? So let them rot :

I will rule as seems me good,
Brook not vassal's hardihood."
'Twas thus the iron Edward spake :
As a child chid did Balliol quake,
While Edward plucked from nerveless hand
The laws and liberty of the land.

Now while Balliol, vassal King,
 Bends the knee to kiss the ring,
Hark to Clio's merry laughter
 Pealing at the hap thereafter.
Edward rules the broad domain,
 Field and forest, Aquitaine.
King of England, Duke in France,
 To Philip's tune should Edward dance,
Since though sad 'tis very true—
 Edward is a vassal too !
But never to kneel was Edward taught,
 And he held a dukedom dear were bought
That asks the homage of bended knee
 From the King of a King for a foreign fee.

Therefore the order wafted over
 By Calais sands the cliffs of Dover,
Edward answereth with scorn
 By Dover's cliffs to Calais borne.
Then behold the dogs of war
 Howling loud from shore to shore.
England's men-at-arms troop round
 Edward at his trumpet's sound.
Edward bids the Scots array
 Likewise this behest obey ;

But the rule from the puling Balliol riven
 To a band of stark Scots lords is given ;
And the voice of the north wind speaks : “ Defiance ”
 To England, but to France : “ Alliance.”
Forth into the forest now,
 See me break yon fir-tree bough ;
Bound we fifty close together,
 They might bend, but never never
Would they break, though strength were mine
 That overcame the Philistine.
Thus was Scotland on the day
 Edward fared with his array,
Breathing vengeance o’er the Border :
 Rancour, feud and dire disorder
Unwind the strength of the Scots’ Lords’ band,
And the boughs split single in Edward’s hand.
Red run the waters of Berwick’s Tweed
And the word of France brings forth no deed.

Strongest in the land by far
Stands the Castle of Dunbar,
By the English held till now,
Frowning from the mountain’s brow.
Patric Earl is Edward’s man,
But Patric’s countess hath her plan,
Hates the Southron with a hate
That openeth to the Scot the gate.
Atholl, Menteith and John Comyn
With thirty knights they enter in.
Perfay their hearts they waxèd stout
When forty thousand Scots without

And fifteen hundred mounted men
Fell on the English of Warrenne !
Down from the heights with battle shout
Rush the Scots on the English rout,
Deeming in their feckless folly
That they swoop on fleeing quarry,
But they meet a battle line
Linked with steel of discipline.
Twice five thousand Scottish men
Ne'er will see the sun again ;
Count with these Sir Patrick Graham,
Since to yield he held it shame.
See the victor Surrey wipe his sword,
Hear rolling back the Castle's ward ;
See Atholl, Comyn and Menteith
Bow their proud necks the yoke beneath.

Chronicle of Scotland's shame,
Blush but write the Stewart's name,
Who yields to Edward Roxburgh's Tower.
Every minute of this hour
Bears us further from the light
As the hands of the dial seek midnight.
By Jedburgh, Dumbarton, Stirling
Northward like the tempest whirling,
Edward stays his course at Perth,
Feasting John the Baptist's birth.
Here with his Barons grouped around
New knights he dubs and the feast is crowned
With the missive of Balliol, King, poltroon,
Craving for peace as a slave a boon.

Answered Edward : “ To Brechin go
And from Durham’s Bishop thy fate shall’st know.”
Balliol’s gone where Balliol must
With two nations’ scorn adust.
See him abject kneel, put off
Royal robes ’mid sneer and scoff ;
See him as a felon stand
With a white wand in his hand ;
Hear him make his recantation,
Tell how yielding to temptation,
To a league with France he had pretended,
Right grievously his lord offended,
Right well deserved that Edward’s brand
Should pierce the heart of his native land.

Thus was Scotland’s King discrowned,
Soon in London’s Tower he found
Respite from the hand of fate
Which had made a pigmy great.
Soon the immemorial Stone,
Riven from its place at Scone,
Stands forlorn in Westminster
Compass’d round with Southern air.
But an ancient ditty tells
How that with the Stone there dwells
Virtue that soon or late will bring
To the stone of the Scots a Scottish King.
Yea, the price of the Stone from Scotland riven
Shall be England’s throne to Scotland given.

Coming of Sir William Wallace

1296-1305

JAMES, 5TH LORD HIGH STEWART (*continued*)

NOW the last glimmer of light dies down
And the Grampians cease to frown ;
I dare not move but hark to the sough
Of the wintry wind in the boughs above,
While in my face plash the tears of the rain :
Shall the tears of my Scotland be shed in vain ?
Thus through the watches of night I stand,
And I hark to the moan of my native land.
My hands are numb with the rain from the trees,
And as the harp's, so my heartstrings freeze.
O for the coming of morning light !
Flames there a torch on the distant height ?
See it streams like a comet from hill to hollow,
And warrior forms the brightness follow.
Now the flame of the torch hath wed the east,
By the flames of the rising sun increased.
Let the smoke of fancy pass on the wind,
While the golden sheaves of the truth we bind.

.

Too high are the high, too low the low,
That the patriot's flame in their hearts should glow.

By the Southron's bribes and civil feud
 Are the high, but the low by need subdued.
 Nor rich, nor of an high degree
 Is the hero, Wallace of Ellerslie.
 Come of the lesser barons' stand,
 His heart is the heart of his native land.
 As a child, when he knew his country's fate,
 Hard beat his heart for love and hate.
 Mighty of mind and mighty of thew,
 To a giant William Wallace grew.
 While yet a youth no man, I ween,
 Dared wrestle with Wallace on the green,
 For once in William Wallace' grip,
 Soul from body straight would slip.
 This all men knew and the lassies too ;
 But of the lassies not a few
 Would venture body, soul and all
 With the giant for to try a fall.
 But hark to the ripple of Irvine water,
 It will tell ye the tale of a happy slaughter,
 When the lad Wallace a-trouting went,
 And silvery was his creel's content.
 Of a happy slaughter tells Irvine water,
 And many a speckled trout he caught there
 He gifts for share of his silver spoil
 To the soldiery that marks his toil.
 Half of his creel to a Southron lout
 William Wallace he empties out ;
 For the other half they ask in vain,
 As he closes the creel and casts again.
 Sudden on the creel rough hands are laid,
 But Wallace turns him undismayed,

72 Coming of Sir William Wallace

And the butt of his harmless hazel bough
 Split in the midst is a weapon now.
 And once he cries to the rout : " Begone,"
 Twice and thrice, but they venture on.
 As the first with sword unsheathed draws near
 Swings the butt of the bough above his ear :
 Felled as an ox to ground, he dies,
 But his sword the ruffian crew defies :
 Gripped in the Wallace grip, the steel
 Bites as a brand that the gods anneal.
 Turning the cowards flee to Ayr,
 But of Wallace hath the forest care.
 O forest and hill of my native land,
 Never beneath your shade I stand,
 Never climb your sides toward the blue of the sky,
 But the tear of memory dims my eye ;
 For I think on the friendship mute you wrought
 When the Wallace and Brus your safety sought.
 Vainly the Southron lord of Ayr
 Craves Wallace of the forest's care.
 Now behold the ripple of Irvine water
 Hath told the tale of a happy slaughter.
 Let the years roll by and a coat of green
 See Clio mirror on moving screen ;
 A coat of green and a bonnet plumed,
 These hath William Wallace presumed
 To don and he walks on Dundee's street,
 And the causeway rings to the spurs on his feet.
 Now a band of Southron captains see
 Wallace attired as a knight should be :
 These like it not that a Scottish slave
 Should walk the street in garb so brave ;

Wherefore they compass Wallace round
And serpents on their tongues abound.
Now a goodly thing in man or in maid
Is meekness, let this for sooth be said,
Then add this further sooth thereto
That meekness Wallace never knew.
Those spue their spawn of flout and lie,
Nor mark the eagle in his eye.
“Eftsoons ! Thy dirk of golden sheath,
My baldric better would hang beneath,”
Cries one, as he grasps the dirk of Wallace.
“Eftsoons ! so be it make thee solace,
My dirk thou shalst have,” cries William Wallace,
“But I, not thou, will choose it a place.”
Straight in the captain’s spleen and liver
Is the dagger sheathed by the ready giver.
Then to the house where dwells the lass
That Wallace wed doth Wallace pass.
True is her heart and she bars the door
As down the street the Southron pour :
Yea ! the wings of the love-god quiver above her
As she bars the door to save her lover.
Batter the door, ye shall batter in vain,
Burst will it not ere Wallace gain
The safety of Cartland’s glen and rock,
Where all their search shall Wallace mock.
What of the wife so leal and fair ?
When the door bursts open they find her there,
And dastards with her death assuage
The blood-thirst of their baulkèd rage.
Now though in greenwood lay perdue
Wallace, right soon this deed he knew,

74 Coming of Sir William Wallace

And on a day the green leaves parted,
As the warrior Wallace, lion-hearted,
Went forth the murtherer for to slay
Of the wife he loved ; no tear he shed
Ere Marion's murtherer was dead.
" Where men do weep is courage less,
Tears slake revenge not wrong redress."
Hislop the English sheriff hight,
Wallace met him at fall of night ;
Black were his thoughts but white his face
As he parleyed with Wallace for a space,
Black was his face and his soul in hell,
When his fellows found him at curfew bell.
As a stake plunged deep in the bed of a river
Stays the weeds as they pass on the tide that
 quiver,
Twined round the stake, and rock and sand,
Flotsam and jetsam of the land,
Join them to these and by degrees
To an isle in the river's midst increase ;
So Wallace stemmed misfortune's tide,
And flotsam gathered to his side.
O the Burning of the Barns of Ayr !
When the Southron lords the Scots ensnare
To talk in love and amity
Of the best for Scotland's polity.
Two by two through the narrow gate
The Scots lords hie them to their fate,
For as they come the Barns within
A running noose slips under their chin,
And they dangle midway in the air,
Those lords of Scotland, pair by pair,

Sir Bryss the Blayr, Sir Neil Montgomerie,
Stewart, Crauford, Boyd, Berkeley and Kennedy.
Certes the Southrons laugh to see
Such fruit hang ripe from the Barn's roof-tree.

In the Barns near by where thus they did
Feasts the Southron, then with heavy lid,
He slumbereth through the summer night.
"Is it the dawn that shineth bright?"

Quoth one to another murtherer;
"Methinks without I heard a stir."

Ay! 'tis a stir, thou hast spoken right,
But the Barn, not the dawn, it shineth bright,
For the stir without 'tis William Wallace
With thrice an hundred Scots for police.
Two by two they entered in
Those Scots lords hanging by their chin;
Two by two ye shall not pass out,
Nor one by one, for round about
Are the doors ablaze with flax and pitch,
And an hundred swords mount guard o'er each.
By God the hanging well was done!
But the burning too 'twas well begun,
Right well begun and better ended:
These burn amain and the lave befriended
With the blessing of the Friar of Ayr
Get knives into their paunches there.
Thus did the Scot and the Southron fare:
Those hang, these roast in the Barns of Ayr.

But with the bruit of vengeance done
Swelled the force of Wallace, one by one,

76 Coming of Sir William Wallace

Then two by two, then ten by ten
 To an army swelled those desperate men.
 Grammercy ! storms methinks betide
 When a Douglas stands at Wallace side.
 William Douglas of Douglasdale
 He makes Disdeir and Sanquhar quail,
 While to the Lennox Wallace wends ;
 But the Stewart and the Brus are wavering friends.
 Methinks it seemeth strange to see
 Heroes of Scotland's history,
 Thus moving dim through doubtful light,
 When the morn first dawns on Scotland's night.
 But hie ye to yonder mountain top ;
 Nothing your nimble gaze shall stop,
 As it roams o'er river and morass.
 Now get ye down and strive to pass
 From this to yonder mountain peak
 Which the fingers of dawn all roseate streak.
 League upon league ye shall roam, my friend,
 Ere ye come at the last to your journey's end,
 For yonder mount lies leagues away
 And dragons foul your path will stay.
 Ay ! a stout heart ye shall need, my friend,
 To come at the last to your journey's end.
 Stout are the Douglas, the Stewart and the Brus :
 Yet they seek at Edward's hands excuse,
 Ay ! Wallace alone takes the eagle's way
 To the peak where the lights of morning play.
 Reft of these lords went Wallace forth
 Gigantic to the friendly north,
 And the granite hills of Aberdeen
 Gave granite to his might, I ween.

See Forfar, Brechin and Montrose
Open their gates to his granite blows ;
At the gates of the Castle on Dundee's rocks
With his hammer of granite Wallace knocks ;
But he stays it hurtling through the air,
For Surrey and Cressingham northward fare
With an army of fifty thousand men
Toward Stirling and Wallace hastes to gain
The heights that look on Cambuskenneth,
Where the hero's star soars to the zenith.
Ten thousand less his warriors were,
Ten thousand more with Wallace there,
As forty thousand men he laid
On the heights above in ambuscade.
Five fathom deep is the water swirling
Round the oaken piles of the Bridge of Stirling.
By Stirling's Bridge see Wallace wait
And the sword in his hand is Scotland's fate.
Now ere the English arms draw nigh
Are the Stewart and Lennox fain to try
For peace and pardon to Wallace there,
Since of their country they despair.
Now hark to the words that Wallace said,
As at his side for peace they pled :
" Get ye gone to our foes once more,
Tell them we came not to implore
Peace, but to battle unafraid,
Man unto man and beard to beard."'
Red for wrath are Surrey's cheeks
When he hears how William Wallace speaks ;
But at his side for priestly ire
Is the heart of Cressingham afire,

78 Coming of Sir William Wallace

Who claims to lead the English van
 Over the narrow bridge's span,
 And drive away those Scottish cattle
 That dare to face their lords in battle.
 Now though the Earl he was full wise
 With years of warlike enterprize,
 Though he saw full well that peril stood
 With sword unsheathed by the bridge of wood,
 Full little all his wisdom skilled
 To stay the wrath that his bosom filled,
 And ever the bishop at his side
 Urged with wild words to cross the tide.
 Now be ye high or be ye low
 Hark to a wisdom all should know :
 Be it in little things or great,
 Who yields to wrath is the fool of fate.
 Not Surrey at Stirling Bridge was Captain,
 But choler the mantle of Surrey wrapped in.
 Thirsting the insult to avenge,
 Over the bridge fares Sir Marmaduke Twenge,
 With Cressingham, with horse and foot,
 They crowd across the bridge of wood,
 And the heart of Wallace leaps for joy
 As he sees the mail-clad foe deploy,
 As he marks their panting foam-flecked horse
 Urged up the hill in furious course.
 No English at the Bridge abide !
 The Bridge unguarded ! Circling wide
 Do the Scots run in : the bridge they hold :
 Ha ! Ha ! They have the lamb in fold !
 This when he sees from hilly brow
 Swoops Wallace down, confusion now

Falls on the English and disaster
From Scots more subtle than their master :
'Twixt Scot and Scot the English are
On the anvil laid as an iron bar,
Which William Wallace the smith doth smite
To crimson for his soul's delight.
Surrey's Earl from the further shore
Watches the English blood outpour,
Watches his horsemen plunge and drown
In the water of Forth that runs swirling down.
Hark to Sir Marmaduke Twenge cry out :
" Turn ye, my nephew, turn about,
Follow my lead, let us cleave a way :
'Tis better to fight than to drown, perfoy."'
Through the thick of the Scots see Sir Marmaduke ride,
With an hundred deaths at his saddle's side ;
But for amazement Death strikes not,
And Sir Marmaduke gains the Bridge, I wot.
He hath gained the Bridge, he hath galloped o'er
Where Surrey waits on the further shore.
Gallant Sir Marmaduke see your name,
How bright it shines on the scroll of fame !
Beside the Bridge where Wallace waits
Ten thousand Southrons pass to their fates.
These with ten thousand first that fell
People the vasty dome of Hell.
Surrey's spurs are in Surrey's steed
And methinks her flanks right red shall bleed,
Ere vanquished Surrey stay his flight
Where Berwick's Tweed owns Edward's might.
See the Scots knights but laud them not,
Doff their English mask and join the Scot ;

80 Coming of Sir William Wallace

For the eagle Wallace strook the quarry
Which now the kestrel hawk would harry.
What of Cressingham, that cruel pest,
Whom of all her foes hates Scotland best ?
Found with the slain, his priestly hide
Is a belt for the sword at Wallace side.
Thus was the battle won, perdie !
And the Scots strengths from sea to sea
Vomit the English forth amain,
Till the land of the Scots is Scots again.

All human passions far above
Over the heart of man is Love,
Greater as heaven to hell than hate,
Which may destroy but not create.
When the troops of the soul the battle wage,
Red in the van of Hate is Rage,
Malice and Envy lead the wings,
Hate from the rear his javelin flings :
See through the air his javelin fly,
Steeped in the poison of a lie.
Valour and Piety and Right
Lead the van of Love as the Passions fight ;
Equal the grappling Forces sway,
Doubtful the winner of the day.
But in the army of Hate is one,
Weareth a mask since the world begun,
So that not well a man may know
Whether he speak with friend or foe.
Not on the left nor the right stays he
But forward glideth subtilly.
Behold the army of Love he seeks

And in the ear of Valour speaks.
 Smite him, I say, ay, smite him down,
 Tear from his body mask and gown :
 Smite, Valour, smite, ay, slay the foe
 That in the guise of a friend doth go.
 Smite and in weed of yellow see
 The writhing form of Jealousy.
 Worser than Edward's iron might,
 Which at the Bridge doth Wallace smite :
 More fell than Famine's staring eyes,
 Which on the wings of Victory flies ;
 Though Scotland at the Bridge prevails,
 Jealousy wins where England fails.
 Ay ! Jealousy wins those great Scots lords,
 Who not for Scotland draw their swords,
 Forasmuch as a knight of low degree
 Is the victor Wallace of Ellerslie.
 But the heart of Wallace knows not doubt :
 " Come ye not with, I shall fare without
 Over the Border and blade of steel
 That England useth shall England feel ; "
 Quoth Wallace, and round him, thick as smoke
 Round the heart of the fire, are the common folk,
 Rolling in columns over the Border,
 Careless of all but Wallace order.
 Durham, Northumberland, Cumberland,
 These feel the weight of Wallace hand ;
 From Inglewood to Derwentwater
 Crimson the snows for English slaughter.
 When the murdered stand around God's throne
 To the count of England's King alone
 Shall be placed this crimson harrying

82 Coming of Sir William Wallace

On England brought by England's king.
Now for a gage that Wallace knew
What to the service of God was due,
Hear how at Hexham came to pass
The saying of the monkish mass.
Within the chapel Wallace stands,
Round him are drawn his warrior bands,
As with a word their wrath he stays,
And the monk trembles, yet obeys,
Muttering the Latin of the Faith,
Though at his heart is the fear of death.
Ere with quivering hands he raiseth up
The Blood of the Lord in the golden cup,
Wallace would put his arms away
That the better he may kneel and pray.
Therefore a moment passeth out
Wallace, when lo, with ribald shout
His followers seize the cup divine,
Wherein the Blood of Christ is wine ;
His vestment from the priest they tear
And the leaves of the missal everywhere
Are strown for witness of disaster
That folly works withouten master.
In the chapel Wallace stands again,
On his brow are written wrath and pain ;
Silence and terror as a pall
Upon those impious reivers fall.
High in the air that knave must swing
Who stole the cup, and the monks that cling
To the knees of Wallace and piteous crave
That as they his soul so he should save
Their bodies, these he bids abide

In sanctuary at his side,
 " Seeing how the devils that England brought
 The souls of the maddened Scots have caught."
 Thus with the Faith did Wallace deal,
 Whose scabbard never knew his steel,
 And from this deed all men may see
 The justice, ruth and piety
 Prisoned within that mighty soul,
 Which yet the stormy times control.
 Now when to the north is Wallace come,
 Of the lords of Scotland there be some
 Who know that for their country's needs
 Names must follow where genius leads.
 Lennox and Douglas jointly work
 On the other lords at the Forest Kirk,
 Who with consentient voice declare
 That Scotland rests in Wallace care.
 Regent of Scotland, see him stand,
 St Andrew's sword in his strong right hand,
 For many of the country folk
 Swear that Scotland's saint with Wallace
 spoke
 And girt him with such awful glaive
 As at heaven's gate doth Gabriel wave.
 To the banner of Scotland now behold
 Wallace summon the young and the old,
 And to Skirmishur the leal, the loyal,
 Who did maintain the Banner Royal
 At the Battle of Stirling Bridge, he gives
 To guard the banner while he lives—
 To Skirmishur and his heirs together
 To guard the banner of Scotland ever.

84 Coming of Sir William Wallace

Now what of England boots to tell
 As the armies of Scotland vaster swell ?
The heart of Edward oversea
 Burns like a glowing coal as he
Swears upon Scotland to assuage
 The fury of his kingly rage.
Therefore he findeth smooth excuse
 To glad the French king with a truce,
And the waves of the North Sea bear him o'er
 From Flemish coast to Sandwich shore.
“ To York,” my lords, “ to York,” he cries,
 As on gray locks the salt spray dries
In crystals that the winds caress,
 While the mighty round their monarch press.
See Hereford, Earl Constable, stand
 By Norfolk Marshal, staff in hand ;
See Gloucester, Arundel, Percy, Wake,
 See the King from the Earl of Surrey take
Such wisdom in his head that dwells
 Whose heart to spurs and flight compels.
But not at York will Edward tarry
 More time than asks to lift and carry
The sacred standard of St John
 From Beverley with benison
Of monks right fain their saint to sell
 And bless the armaments of Hell.
At Roxburgh town he stays his course,
 Where champ their steel seven thousand horse,
Where eighty thousand footmen wait,
 The Gascons whom the waves belate.
These when at last to Roxburgh come :
 Quoth Edward : “ By my halidom !

Right dear the caitiff Scot shall pay
 My Lord of Surrey's shameful day."
 Meanwhile Sir William Wallace strove
 All men to gather, as behove,
 To guard their native land, but ill
 Did the Scots lords their part fulfil ;
 Though loyal to his banner came
 Sir John, his friend, the leal, the Graham,
 And Stewart of Bonkyl and Macduff ;
 These though the best were scarce enough
 To smite the English, Envy mean
 Stood Wallace and those lords between,
 Vile treason through the Scots camp stalked
 And Wallace of the victory baulked.
 In allies twain put Wallace trust,
 To whom all yield, since yield they must.
 For as Edward northward moved he found
 A desolation spread around.
 His fleet, long waited on, came not ;
 He sought, but nowhere found, the Scot.
 Famine and rage his vitals gnaw ;
 True allies those, as Wallace saw.
 Thus all were well and Edward spurned
 By famine and No Foe had turned
 To Edinburgh town once more,
 Diseased, cold, starving, weary, sore ;
 Had not two traitor Scots revealed
 Where Wallace and his men, concealed,
 Viewed Edward from the wood hard by.
 Edward could ne'er the Scots espy,
 Save for those traitor lords : they are
 The Earls of Angus and Dunbar.

86 Coming of Sir William Wallace

Poltroons and felons they declare
 The secret ambush, for they were
Out of allegiance yesterday
 And to creep back again to-day,
Sell Scotland to her Southron foe.
 Thus deadly weeds together grow
With balsam in the self-same wood,
 The very vile with very good.

Battle of Falkirk

NOW of Falkirk's field be chronicled
The crimson bloody tale ;
A day of treachery, of rage,
Of envy, muckle bale
Falls now on Scotland ; great Scots lords,
Hark how they bicker loud,
And Comyn hath lured leal Bonkyl's Stewart
To speech that weaves his shroud.

Proud Barons, ill it likes them
That the son of a lesser lord,
(For Wallace' father held of Stewart).
Should wield the chiefest sword
Against the might of England,
It irks them to obey—
Whose vassals, thralls, yet throng their halls—
A lesser lord than they.

Therefore the bold, false Comyn,
Who leads the heavy horse
Hath now procured that Bonkyl's Stewart
Should steer a feckless course.
For he bids him seek out Wallace
And claim to lead the vaward :
“ That shalst thou not, nor any Scot,”
Cries Wallace, “ rest assured.”

Then the Lord High Stewart's brother,
For thus was brave Bonkyl,
Echoes the vile false fable
That the Comyn did instil.
"Hark, Warden," cries to Wallace,
"To the tale of the howlat's deed,
That not endured," quoth Bonkyl's Stewart,
"To wear so mean a weed,

And cravèd of Dame Nature
That from each nobler fowl
She would pluck a feather and bind together
To deck withal the owl.
Where be thy thralls, Sir Warden?
Thy vassals where be they?—
More fit, perdie, it were that we
Command, and thou obey."

Thus artless spake the hero,
As the crafty Comyn bade.
As a house on fire blazed Wallace ire,
Nigh brake his heart for rage.
"Know, Stewart, that I only
Have bearded Edward King,
But not to you this tale is due,
But to the false Comyn."

Thereat did Wallace leave him
And fain had passed away
With the whole Scots army from the field
When he marked the foe's array;

But when his eye of eagle
Saw that this might not be,
The schiltrons square, did straight prepare,
A fourfold prodigy.

With their lances slantwise turning
Outward upon the foe,
So nigh they stood was no man could
Atween those warriors go.
This was first done of Wallace,
Who first in history
Conceived the square and wrought it there
Hard by the Torwood's tree.

Then the bowmen placed behind them,
From Selkirk's forest came ;
The Stewart's brandanes most they were
And most bare Stewart's name.
Beyond these bands with Comyn
Black treason was a-horse,
Where Comyn stood hard-by the wood,
Pondering the coward's course.

Then to his lords spake Edward :
" Meseemeth best to wait,
How thinkest thou, Lord Marshal ?—
Till our men have rest and ate ?—
Right keen and hearty seem the Scots.
What redeth Lincoln's Earl ?—
And what my lord of Hereford ?"—
All answer : " We must hurl

Battle of Falkirk

Our might upon them, whiles we may,
Else ere the set of sun
They shall have travelled league on league."
" In God's name, then, fall on,"
Quoth Edward, and the first line moves
With those lords in command ;
But the great morass they may not pass
That spreadeth to either hand.

Therefore they fetch half circle
And the next line onward speeds,
Which Anthony of Durham,
That mitred warrior leads.
Quoth to those lords the Bishop :
" My lords, I rede ye stay,
Till my lord the King himself shall bring
Forward the third array."

" Stick to thy mass, Lord Bishop,"
Shouts Bassett of Drayton back,
" We will not stay us from the fray,
Though the Church's arm be slack."
" On then," shouts Durham answer,
" We all are knights this day,"
And the green of the moss all plunge across,
To join the first mêlée."

But the thousand horse of Comyn
Turns bridle and takes flight
With shame and armour heavy clad,
For piteous cruel spite.

Full six-and-thirty banners
Float over England's peers,
But the schiltrons square stands firm and fair
For all those Southron spears.

They furious charge the schiltrons,
And again and again they fail,
While the arrows of Stewart's bowmen
Pierce many a coat of mail,
But alas as the gallant Bonkyl
Goes a-gallop past his men
He falls from horse in rapid course
Never to rise again.

Then his bowmen gather around him
Where wounded he lies aground,
But the Southron foes are many,
And the weak spot they have found.
By sixties upon their twenties
They charge the Selkirk bows,
But there is not one faithful Scot
From Bonkyl's side that goes.

Like gods they die around him,
Ruddy and tall and fair,
And the Southron when the battle's o'er
Makes marvel at them there,
Like statues of the gods of old
Round Ares self that lie—
They fight till death draws their last breath.
Then by their Stewart die.

Battle of Falkirk

Now where around brave Bonkyl
The tide of battle breaks
Comes the third line with King Edward
Who straight his vengeance slakes
On the bowmen of Selkirk forest,
As his slingers great stones whirl,
His knights ahorse their furious course
Upon the schiltrons hurl.

At the last the schiltrons waver,
As the Southron horse breaks through,
Trampling the brave Scots warriors down,
Outnumbered six to two.
There fifteen thousand perish,
With Macduff and the men of Fife,
But Wallace may yet flee away,
All lost but only life.

Right ruthless was King Edward,
No quarter took nor gave,
Though first of knights he claimed to be,
He was at heart a knave.
A cruel, bitter tyrant,
Loathed even of his lords,
His name was worse than any curse,
His bounties cut like swords.

When the bloody day was over,
He burned St Andrews town ;
Where'er he went, two words, " clene brent,"
The ancient scribe notes down.

Toward the Merse fares Edward,
 Brus flies as he draws nigh,
And the flames of Ayr's strong Castle
 Stream on the midnight sky.

Red ruin brought King Edward
 On all, both high and low,
No fame there is more ill than his
 In all the ages' flow.

Mark we how in our Scotland
 All things of great and high,
Steep rock and mighty precipice
 Where foaming waters fly,
And camps where Roman legions camped,
 All things of great and grand,
Bear Wallace name and deathless fame
 Given by his grateful land.

Wallace was all a Scotsman,
 Edward Plantagenet
Had nought of English but the soil,
 Where his Norman camp was set.
Wallace for freedom battled,
 Edward for cruel pride,
And the King in chains while memory reigns
 By the martyred Scot must ride.

Capture and Death of Wallace

NOW of the men of Scotland these
Be their names that won to King
Edward's peace :
All men I say, all men I mean,
Save one : ye ken the man I mean.
Champion of Scotland, not for nought
Hath Wallace against Edward fought.
Quoth the old parchment Norman-writ :
“ To win their peace if they think fit,
These be the fines they shall acquit ”—
Alexander de Lindesay, Bois and Graham,
Soulis, Comyn, Fraser—last the name
Of James we find, the Lord High Stewart.
Now to all save one is peace secured.
Turn we the parchment, rouse to hiss
The kingly serpent : Hark to this :
“ Last as to William Wallace he
Shall crave an he will our clemency.”
Such clemency do leopards shew
While above the clouds soars their eagle foe.
These words to William Wallace mean
Once more a flight to the forest green,
To the forest wilds of Dunfermline,
To moors and fells through shower or shine,
He must betake him.

Seven long years,
 Eagle in cloud, he disappears.
 Yet some believe that Philip the King
 Loved him right well and his signet-ring
 Gave unto Wallace, to the end
 That he through jocund France should wend
 To Rome and with Pope Boniface
 For Scotland plead in her distress.
 None knows what here there is of truth,
 Though Philip's writing stand for sooth,
 Found in the Tower of London town,
 An antique leaflet crinkled brown.
 Perchance this well-worn screed was part
 Of the light treasure near his heart
 That Wallace carried with him aye
 And pondered many a lonely day.
 Full well it likes me now to dream
 That the King of France was friend to him,
 That for Wallace once the fragrant south
 Gave him to kiss of her sweet mouth.
 But be this false or be it true,
 King Edward's peace he never knew,
 And if he roamed in foreign land
 Sought like the bird his native strand.
 In the woods and the wilds he dwelt not lone,
 For ever where greatness must atone
 For greatness, drawn by what is great
 Comes woman by decree of fate.
 Her name we know not. As we pass
 We raise to her a viewless glass,
 And drink her health with endless honour,
 She has her country's love upon her.

96 Capture and Death of Wallace

How Wallace sleeping in his bed
Was by his trusted folk betrayed
I tell and of a certain Scot
Who was to him Iscariot :
He was Dumbarton's Governor
To Edward, but acquaint before
With Wallace and when Wallance came
From England, sold his name and fame
To Edward for a great reward :
Gold and to be of Lennox lord.
Wallace at Robroyston he took
By treachery of Wallace cook :
His cook that stole his arms away
Whiles Kerlé slept, well knew, perfoy,
What Wallace and one sword could compass.
Menteith came next with kiss of Judas,
Forsworn before, forsworn once more,
Swears that if Wallace let them lead him
Safe to Dumbarton he will free him.
“ This dost thou swear upon thy soul ? ”
Asked Wallace of Menteith,

(The scroll

Of infamy will hold no more,)
“ Yea,” quoth Menteith, and straight he swore.
Then unto Wallace privily
He spake : “ Dear friend, 'twere meet that we
Do semblance make thine arms to bind
Lest Southron in Dumbarton find
The purpose in my loyal mind.”
Then with strong cords his arms they bound
Suchwise as most his flesh to wound,
And never loosed these bonds shall be

Till straight convoyed o'er Solway's Sea
 At Carlisle lies within the Tower
 Beareth his name unto this hour.
 Next in the Tower of London we
 The Saviour of all Scotland see,
 And savage Edward laugh for glee.
 These tie their names to such a bell
 As clattereth aye on the road to hell.
 Hark to the clatter : ye shall hear
 A peal to crack the devil's ear.
 Hear peal the first, his grievous name
 That cowereth 'mid unending shame ;
 Hear English Langtoft and beneath
 An English pen first find Menteith :
 " Sir John Menteith pursued so nigh
 He took him on nyght his leman by."
 Hear the Scots Winton : " In tha dayis
 Jon of Menteith tuk Willame Walays
 In Glasco." Hear Blind Harry noise
 The like fell truth with tuneful voice :
 " For cowatice, Menteth, apon falss wyss
 Betraysyt Wallace, that was his gossop twyys."
 And with English Lingard, Scottish Hailes
 At feckless old Blind Harry rails.
 Take we the wings' wide privilege
 And in an instant span an age.
 Behold Lord Hailes ! Ay, take a pinch
 Of snuff, my lord, thou'llt never flinch
 In giving judgment for the great
 And let the weak on judgment wait.
 " That most respectable authority
 Blind Harry bard doth not agree

With my well-thought apology
 For John Menteith." Methinks we see
 In seventeen hundred and sixty-three
 Lord Justice Hailes, come home from Court,
 His feet in slippers, glass of port
 On the mahogany at his side,
 The day's wrongdoers hanged and tried.
 How shall he fill his learned leisure
 Better than judging—for his pleasure?
 So let Sir John Menteith be tried
 For Wallace martyred: on a side
 Menteith and Edward stand for panel:
 Blind Harry with his pipe of scrannel
 Stands on the other. Evidence!
 Let Harry the bard be taken hence
 And duly in the stocks screwed tight,
 That dares to have been in the right!
 A sorner¹ minstrel grown in jails
 Condemn Menteith, King Edward, Hailes!
 That makes even Justice drop her scales!
 Sad proof is here and all too clear
 But tragic truth long fared afoot,
 Till Harry took his pipe unto't.

.
 Strange likeness bears the scene divine,
 Long since played out in Palestine,
 To Scotland's champion seized and bound,
 By one he trusted compassed round:
 Menteith's betrayal under tryst,
 Iscariot's of our Saviour Christ;
 At marks three hundred Wallace priced,

¹ Sorner = one who takes free quarters.—Jamieson.

At thirty pieces Jesus Christ.
 Christ for betrayer had, I wot,
 Judas, surnamed Iscariot,
 Wallace his comrade, for beneath
 And above them all ye shall find Menteith.
 The sign for the Son of Man betrayed,
 The kiss, the Sacrament of Bread
 For William Wallace, likewise Bread—
 The Loaf turned flatside up on its head.
 With Laurel for a sign of scorn
 Was Wallace crowned, as Christ with Thorn.
 Christ died the whole wide world to save,
 Wallace his life for Scotland gave.
 Methinks the Jew Iscariot
 Less felon than Menteith the Scot,
 For this, that while his own hand slew
 Iscariot the repentant Jew,
 Menteith the traitor Scot waxed fat
 Upon the English gold he gat,
 And that he was of Stewart kin
 Makes yet more great his load of sin.

Twelve the Apostles were, I ween,
 Who with Iscariot were thirteen ;
 Twelve times twelve Stewarts lie beneath
 Heroic stone for one Menteith.
 Great men, great races thus are known :
 They dare their sins confess, atone.
 Right fitly as it seems to me
 Do we compare where they agree
 What happed unto the good and true
 With Him who all things human knew.

100 Capture and Death of Wallace

Christ Jesus for the whole world shone,
Wallace was Scotland's Champion.

.
Stood Wallace in Westminster Hall,
A giant towering over all.
The crown of laurel on his head
Set there because in jest he said
He should be crowned in Westminster,
As one well used to crowns he ware.
He sat upon a bench alone,
As might a King upon his throne.
Rose up Sir Peter Mallorie,
Judge for King Edward : thus the plea :
Treason in chief that Wallace wrought,
When against England's King he fought,
Whose army down to doom he hurled
Where at Stirling Bridge Forth's water swirled ;
That after, bands and leagues he formed
And England's strengths and castles stormed,
Abbeys and villages he brent,
Liege subjects of the King he shent.
This the impeachment. Wallace spake :
His voice it made the rooftree quake.
" In the chief article ye lie,
Not guilty of aught treason I
That ne'er allegiance owed nor owe,
But was and am the deadly foe
To England and to England's king
Whom well I know unpitying.
I stormed his castles, abbeys burned,
His townships, villages I turned
To ruins smouldering that he

Who brought all tears, all misery,
 On Scotland mine, should mark the same
 When unto England home he came.
 Of English men full many a score
 This strong right arm hath slain in war :
 Right glad were I they had been more.”
 He spake and fell a silence dread,
 As Mallorie the sentence read.
 And as he read, so was it done,
 A deed makes blink the very sun.
 Discrowned and chained, at horses’ tail
 Do headsman’s varlets Wallace hale
 To Smithfield elms, there hang him high,
 Yet not so long as he shall die ;
 Then cut him down whiles he doth live
 And to the flames his vitals give.
 This do they that he may behold
 Those parts consumed that made him bold.
 His head with many strokes struck off
 They set upon a pole for scoff
 On London Bridge, whence it looketh down,
 And yet on Englishman doth frown.
 Next of his limbs : his great right arm
 They carry where it wrought most harm,
 To Bridge of Tyne at Newcastel,
 Where heavy on the folk it fell ;
 The left at Berwick-upon-Tweed
 Bleeds where it made full many bleed.
 To Scotland goes his dearest part,
 To Aberdeen the Wallace heart ;
 Perth asks not his right foot and limb
 To mind its folk full well of him.

" 'Stead of his banner and gonfanon
 These be the trophies ye look upon,"
 Writ an English clerk, to flout the Scot.
 More than aught banner, well I wot,
 Do these poor relics rouse the Scot,
 That withered limb, this bloodied arm,
 See they are now a potent charm ;
 That heart, which now no more can beat
 Driveth the blood at fever's heat
 Through the chill north.

Had Edward striven

How best from the Scot his yoke be riven,
 Thus of the hero to display
 The relics were the surest way.
 Blows force obedience from the slave,
 To victory urge the conquered brave.
 Certes the limbs of Wallace fight,
 Thus torn asunder, with more might
 Than when his men-at-arms were hurling
 Half England from the Bridge of Stirling.

.

But winter falls upon the land,
 Right heavy is King Edward's hand ;
 So let's be hush and in your ear
 Ye shall a little whisper hear
 Whiles the snow falls : December's cold,
 But Edward, as the year, is old.
 This is the tale of a great white gled
 Which plucked the een from Wallace head,
 On London Bridge and over Tweed
 Bare and let drop them nigh a mead,

Upon a bank where grows the fern
Hard by a town where flows a burn.
Untouched, unseen of all are they
And with the winter's rains decay.
But every spring a bed as blue
With flowerets as his eyes were true
Blossoms, until they watch a scene,
That likes full well those bluebell een.
See ye the bank, the town, the burn ?
Behold ! I thrust aside the fern.

James, 5th Lord High Stewart

DIED 1309

HIS SON WALTER MARRIED PRINCESS MARJORY BRUS
AND DIED 1326

SOMEWHAT the muse of Falkirk Field hath
told,
How that the Stewart's brother, brave Sir
John,
Fell with an arrow smitten and his bold
Brandanes of Ettrick Forest died upon,
Around his knightly body, as they fell
That fought for good King James at Halidon.
Those from their slayers did high praise compel,
For goodly, strong, was every forester,
And sad it was to see them lying there.

Told also is some part of Scotland's woes
That followed after : Wallace great and good :
But not Caerlaverock held against the foes,
Nor how the wee Scots garrison withstood
England in arms, then issued forth a band
Of starveling heroes, and the savage mood
Of Edward melted not indeed, but planned
Less than its wonted evil, for their lives
In chains he gave the Scots, but spared their wives.

Pause we a moment now by Bonkyl's grave,
Who fell at Falkirk in the red July :

His life for Scotland and their lives he gave
 To seven sons and to a daughter. Cry
 Their names with me, for 't is a pleasant game,
 And to the days of old best draws us nigh.
 First then of Alexander, Douglas came,
 Red Earl of Angus : many Earls he gat ;
 But one alone methinks that belled a Cat !

Next stands Sir Alan Stewart of Dreghorn ;
 From him came Lennox Dukes, to kingship near,
 From him were Earls of Darnley, D'Aubigny born,
 From him the Earls of Galloway and here
 The Stewart Muse would heartily rejoice
 Their scion lives and makes with Stewarts cheer—
 And more, his Countess hath bred jolly boys—
 The Earl that proves—raise high the Loving Cup !
 Male line direct to Falkirk's hero up.

The fourth gat Earls of Buchan, of Traquair,
 Of Athol, Lords of Grandtully and Lorn,
 Of Appin ; these a special sadness wear,
 As being most of ancient glories shorn.
 Like to a high-born maiden raped from home
 This ancient name from ancient hills was torn,
 And Campbells o'er the hills of Appin roam.
 Appin hath lost his lordship, Lorn his name,
 Campbell won both and therewithal won shame.

Third stands Sir Walter Stewart, Dalswinton,
 From him the Lords Blantyre, the Earls of Galloway ;
 The seventh Steuarts of Coltness, Allanton,
 And others that I may not speak this day ;

106 James, 5th Lord High Stewart

But three, Sir John, Sir Alan and Sir James
Fell fighting as their sire in deadly fray,
Each as his sire the patriot's laurel claims,
Each for his land the soldier's task hath done
At sunset on the Hill of Halidon.

Margaret the daughter Thomas Randolph wed,
Him that was Earl of Moray, Lord of Mar.
But now methinks the Muse your thoughts hath
led

Back to the Stewarts. What the doings are
Of the High Stewart, fain would tell this rhyme :
Mayhap he sailed to France, ambassador,
To crave King Philip's aid, for toward this time
King Edward Paisley Monastery burned—
Warm thanks which such a voyage may have
earned.

This only is for sooth that ere he died
James the High Stewart sware allegiance
To Brus, and signed the writing that defied
Edward and sent it to the King of France.
His spouse, Lord March's child, Cecilia,
Left issue Walter, John who by mischance
Fell at Dundalk, and Stewart of Durrisdeer, '
That Walter's, his boy nephew's warriors led
With Douglas, Randolph, upon many a raid.

Fourth of the name and sixth to hold the place
Which to the zenith of fair fame shall grow
Is Walter Stewart. See his boyish face
Shine at the Torwood's muster, and the foe

At Bannockburn shall feel his hardihood,
For valour sooner than the beard doth shew,
When through the veins of youth runs hero blood.
Of this anon, for now the Muse would tell
How at the crowning of the Brus befell.

The Coming of Robert Brus

NOT with the sounding of trumps nor the
voicing of heralds he comes,
Robert the Brus in times troublous and
ill at ease ;

Grandson of him that I sang who lost at Norham
a kingdom

By the choice of Edward the King whose eyes as
December freeze :

Not with the beating of drums !

Not with the heralds he comes !

Snow puppet Balliol melts in the first rays of February's
sun ;

Wallace was sword and a heart : Brus is the coming
of spring.

Comyn the Red the Earl hath the sister of Balliol
wedded :

Nearer the throne by a span ! Nearer the throne by a
ring !

Place on the throne but for one

Only since time begun !

League betwixt Balliol and Comyn ! Ha ! Ha ! there
be men in the north !

Southward they march and besiege him that would
bend not the knee.

The Coming of Robert Brus 109

Brus must from Annandale fly must fly from his
castle Lochmaben.

Proud and strong is the Brus, strong need his con-
querors be !

Comyn is Cock o' the north !

Comyn is over the Forth !

Shall not the Brus seek revenge ? Not the Brus, but
the leopard of England !

Edward shall march to the north, Edward and that
shall avail !

Thus to and fro as the waves of a vast river surging at
flood-tide

Sway the ships of the states, craftily wise men sail.

Comyn and Bruce have a band ! ¹

Lo they are hand within hand !

Wisdom had Robert the Brus, ye shall blink at his
radiant renown

Scintillant over his head, Brus that had Douglas to
friend !

Valour and wisdom were his, but the first wore the
robes of the second,

Else had he never achieved, foiled at the start of his
end.

Wit to win Scotland's crown !

Strength to pull England down !

“ What will ye give me, my lord, if I yield ye my
claim to the throne ? ”

As they from Striveling ² rode, quoth to the Comyn
the Brus.

¹ A band in old Scotland meant an agreement of mutual support.

² Stirling.

110 The Coming of Robert Brus

“ Brus, thou shall’st have my claim if thou yield me
thy lands for a shadow,”

Answered the Comyn to Brus : “ ay ! and the help o’
my hous ! ”

Mighty lords riding alone
Barter the claim to a throne !

Thus they agreed, thus sware, but the splendours of
kingship to Comyn
Even as to Robert the Brus more than all baronies
were.

Edward hath learned of the pact, but Brus’ cousin of
Gloucester

Sends him a wordless rede : gold and the glint of a spur.
Time o’er the Border to win,
Thanks to the love of his kin !

Over the Border by night flies the Brus and the terrible
Edward,
Fingering the keys of the Tower, thinks he was late by
an hour.

Over the Border fares Brus and he meets a retainer of
Comyn
Gallopingsouthward to Court. Slain ! the despatches
he bore,

Ah ! they make Brus clutch his sword :
“ So !—we’ll be even, my lord ! ”

Guile hath the Brus when he will. What pious lords
at Dumfries
Enter the Chapel to pray ; Now the chief altar are
nigh ?

The Coming of Robert Brus 111

Ha ! but their speech waxeth loud ever louder as
near the high altar :

“ Traitor,” cries one and “ Ye lie,” hark to the other
reply.

Hallowèd shrine of Dumfries,
Strange is the praying of these !

Flashes the dagger of Brus, Comyn turns, but the
dagger is quicker :

Murder and sacrilege both ! Comyn in agony lies
Blooding the altar steps. “ I doubt I have slain him,
Kirkpatrick,”

Crieth the Brus, as a ghost, pale from the chapel he
flies.

“ Doubt ye ?—But I’ll mak sicker—
Comyn shall nae mair bicker,”

Fiercely Kirkpatrick makes answer, and rushing with-
in finds one,

Robert Comyn the Knight, ’ware of his kinsman’s
plight.

Slays him and slays too the Earl, where his life at the
altar is ebbing.

“ Sicker ” in truth hath he made, now joins his master
in flight.

Now is the fell deed done,
Sacrilege, murder, in one.

Sacrilege, murder are done ! will the Brus dare King
Edward defy ?

England in arms against Brus ! true will his Scotland
abide ?

112 The Coming of Robert Brus

Nay, but the many have fear, and Scotland is also for
Edward ;

Fourteen barons for Brus, Lennox and Atholl will ride.

Brus in the Brus shall rely,
England and Scotland defy !

These with the Earls be the first that dare to declare
them for Brus :

Bishops of Moray, of Glasco, St Andreys, the Abbot of
Scone,

Gilbert of Errol and Hugh de la Haye, Boyd, Barclay
and Fleming,

Fraser the brother of Simon ; Somerville craveth the
boon.

Somervilles' out with the Brus,
Shall Thomas Randolph refuse ?—

He that is kin, Brus's brethren four and the Earls that
their troth gave,

Atholl and Lennox alone ?—These against all men be
few.

“ Not with the crown on my head,” quoth the Brus
as to Scone from Lochmaben

Faring he meets by the way one that shall ever be
true :

Douglas the bold and the brave,
True beyond death and the grave !

Robert the Brus come to Scone for the crowning, but
where be the crown,

Where be the sceptre and robes ?—vanished the
Destiny stone !

Stolen by Edward the King, but the banner of Balliol
doth service :

Majesty all of his own Brus o'er his shoulders hath
thrown.

Homage, my Lords, bow down
To the King in the ¹ Saints' gilt crown !

Crowned ! it is over and done, when sudden a sound as
of strife !

Quickly the King grips his sword ! Thunder of
horses of war !

Friends ! 'tis a lady fair !—Isabella, Countess of
Buchan,

Gallopeth up to the porch, waving her hand from
afar.

Buchan hath her to wife,
Blood of the Thanes of Fife !

Long ere King Malcolm's days hath the blood of
Macduff had the setting

Kings of Scots in the chair, ancient as fable of Troy.
Pledged unto Edward is Fife, but for Brus is his sister
of Buchan !

Hark how she winsomely pleads : “ Had I been born
but a boy ! ”

Surely her suit she shall win,
Crown him as Earl she had been !

Ivory smooth are her hands, and her gold-plaited hair,
a delight,

Ripples in tassels of gold, glitters the old Abbey
through !

¹ At the coronation a crown was taken from the head of the
image of a saint.

114 The Coming of Robert Brus

Roses are red on her cheeks, as she rangeth the robes
of the King :

All she hath craved he hath done, more if she would
he will do !

Bright gleam her eyes, so bright !
Crowned ! she hath crowned him aright !

Events following the Coronation of
Brus to the setting forth of
Edward I. on his last Expedition
against the Scots

1305-1306

WHEN now the Brus was crowned, no
time he let,
But gat him straight to horse, and soon
he set

The Border in amaze, for Edward's men,
Sheriffs and bailiffs, threw he in their jail,
And to the heart of Scots brought Wallace home again.

But Edward, when at first he heard the tale
Of Comyn slain, Brus crowned, went deadly pale,
From red he went to be and grim he grew,
For at his vitals gnawed a mortal spite,
That the down-trampled Scot should dare to take his
due.

But chiefest plagued him that the lordly might
Of Brus should now his Norman Master smite.
(His gossip once was Brus, and histories tell,
How that the twain at hazard went to play,
And Edward in his cups of felon Scots would mell.¹)

¹ Talk of.

116 Events following Coronation of Brus to

Yet though thus shrewd the thrust, he wastes no day,
Making him ready for the deadly fray,
And first his son the Prince of Wales shall keep
High vigil in the Church at Westminster,
Where, as men said, the Prince of Wales did fall on
sleep !

But these be toys. Full knight he dubs him there,
And many squires besides, then passeth where
Spread is a mighty feast, and when the Swan,
Which is, as all men know, for sign of troth
And steadfastness, within its golden leafage shone,

Rose up the King, and grim and old made oath
“ On¹ Goddes sowle and on the wythe Swan both,”
That on the Scot he’d bloody vengeance take
For Comyn’s blood and for all treachery done,
Then to the Holy War set forth and die for Christ his
sake.

He spake, and lo, the Prince upon the Swan
Constrained to swear that if he die ere done
The vengeance, then the Prince shall straightway boil
His flesh from off his bones, and carry these
Displayed until the Scot he utterly shall foil.

The Prince must swear, perforce, to gain his ease
From one whose eyes could as December freeze,

¹ From a statement in the Battle Abbey Book by the late Duchess of Cleveland, I gather that the following motto is the oldest extant in English and it dates from about this period :

“ Ha, ha, the wythe Swan
By Goddes sowle I am thy man.”

For careless he of any malison,
 And careless too of murdered infants' eyes,
 Who only dalliance loved and Piers Gaveston.

Now that the King may thoroughly chastise
 Those felon Scots, is need of vast supplies.
 Thus he ordains : One tenth shall laymen bring,
 The clergy one thirteenth—for in that day
 The King ruled rich and poor, but now the poor rule
 rich and King.

Northward King Edward and his arms make way,
 And as they pass, the Prince of Wales will slay
 Woman and child, and lo, King Edward chides
 His offspring for this wanton cruelty—
 But in the Leopard's cub the Leopard's blood abides.

Full sick King Edward at Carlisle must lie,
 But ordereth Earl Pembroke presently ¹
 Lead on to Scotland all his vast array ;
 Then cometh unto Borough-upon-Sands,
 Where One shall force him make full long delay,
 And for the last time clasp to curse the Scot his
 mailed hands.

¹ *i.e.* at once.

Adventures of the Brus

FROM tree to tree the bird of song takes wing,
And change shall know the Muse that Brus
would sing,

For various as the plumage of these rhymes,
So Brus shall change his fortune many times,
And bred a Norman at an English court
Shall oft behold the random Fates at sport,
Ere holpen with strong arm and stedfast mind
Fate, like a woman won, shall turn most kind.
Now see the Brus below the walls of Perth,
And hear him challenge Pembroke's earl, whose birth
Hath not o'ercome a certain subtlety
In one who answereth Brus : assuredly
The morrow morn they'll meet in single fight,
But falleth on the Scots that self-same night,
When all disarmed and all were off their guard
That put full trust in Pembroke's plighted word.

Pembroke ! a pretty wit, that drave the foe
Outnumbered and outmatched to fight, although
Others methinks that bore your lofty name—
Noblesse oblige and chivalry !—might blame.
But let it pass. Forsooth, my lord, well nigh
You with your war-horse came that night to die,
For Brus, when first he knew of the surprize,
Sprang to his sword and—what is that he cries,

As high it swings, and lo, your steed falls dead,
And you, my lord, must tumble o'er its head ?—
History records not—leaves us all to guess—
But you, my lord, were saved, for all the press
Of Edward's men came up and Methven's wood
Reeked red with Scotland's best and bravest blood.
Thrice was the Brus unhorsed and once so nigh
Taken that Mowbray dared aloud to cry :
“ I hold the Brus ” : but with a fearful blow
That Mowbray felled made Seton answer : “ No.”
Five hundred strong, a band of brave men fought,
And from the wood escaping, Atholl sought.
But Brus' brother, Edward Brus, was taken,
And Randolph, nephew ; not on these was slaken
King Edward's wrath, but many a lesser knight
Must Pembroke hang to sate his sovereign's spite.

.
Behold the Douglas and his King and Queen,
That queenly wins to him nigh Aberdeen,
With other dames whose escort cavalier
Is Nigel, Brus' brother, beyond peer.
Fain had the Brus maintained him in the town,
But he must fly, and trailing locks and gown
And female smoothness bear along with him,
Where brambles tear ; and ah ! the forest dim !
But good Sir James, he slays the deer and roe,
Catches and cooks the salmon, cheers their woe
With many a merry tale of courtly France
Where ladies languish and where palfreys prance.
And to these ladies seems it strange that he
Thus well-attuned to softest luxury

Should roam the wilds and laugh at cold and fears,
Who more than Brus himself their spirits cheers.
For Douglas hut and palace were the same,
A gallant knight was he, where'er he came.
True chivalry is like the diamond stone
Which oft with worthless pebbles lies unknown :
Befalls adversity with hammer cruel,
Shatters the pebbles but reveals the jewel.

They laughed and wandered, till upon a day,
Behold them at the sources of the Tay,
Hard by the country of the Lord of Lorn
Who on the Brus hath deadly vengeance sworn
For the Red Comyn slain, whose kin he wed,
And now a thousand Highlandmen hath led,
Joined with Argyll and every pass beset,
That hardly men on foot might passage get,
Never a mounted knight upon his steed,
Which the Lochaber axe and dirk make bleed
With stabs and gashes, till the Brus is ware
That Parthian is the victory he must dare.
Therefore he sounds retreat. When all have
passed

Brus turns about, heroic, lone and last.
Backward they pass, while Brus' mighty sword
This way and that way swinging, of the horde
That presseth on them ever shears the head.
'Tis doughty done and many an one falls dead.
But three there be amid the swarming throng,
Father and sons, that stalwart are and strong.
These make an oath that they the Brus will slay
Or seize for prisoner (ancient feud had they,

Being of Durward's blood) ;

Then One ! Two ! Three !

Onward they rush where room for one may be
Betwixt the ledge of rock and loch below.
The first hath gripped his rein, but at a blow
Shoulder and arm are sheared, the next his foot
Grips 'neath the stirrup, but the King hath stood
Upright, and digging spurs into his horse
Forward he boundeth, but the foe perforce
Brus draggeth with him, till his sword hath cleft
Through pate and arm ; of these their sire bereft
Leaps like to cat-o'-mountain on the King,
And at his back so closely doth he cling
That Brus wants space his mighty sword to swing,
But stooping quick draws forth his iron mace,
Strikes, slays, but rids him not of that embrace ;
And close the dead man's grip his mantle holds
In death as life, and death were in its folds,
But Brus makes loose the brooch—brooch, cloak and
ketheran fall—

And Brus' mantle is the ketheran's pall.
Thus from the pass by force of wit and arm
The King guards all beyond the reach of harm.
And still MacDougal vaunts " The brooch of Lorn,"
His heirs shall vaunt it to the men unborn,
For Brus will yet be Scotland's Evergreen
When twice six hundred years shall roll between.

Thus having gained of time, not foes, a truce
Farewell unto his Queen, must bid the Brus,
And in the charge of Nigel shall she ride
First to Kildrummie, but not there shall bide,

But having gained St Duthac's shrine at Tain
Craves of that saint protection all in vain.
The felon Earl of Ross burst in and gave
The Queen to Edward—Earl that played the knave—
But Brus afoot fled westward to the wild :
In Rachrin's isle the winter months beguiled.
Most brave and beauteous youth was Nigel, mild
And courteous with fair dames—they loved him well—
But when his blood was stirred, a brand of hell.
Kildrummie Castle standeth on a hill,
Hath men, hath water and hath food, and ill
Would Nigel Brus conceive he held the place,
If from the Southron he should crave for grace.
No grace he craves, but counting on his corn
Stored up within, he payeth scorn with scorn.
Betrayed by traitors of his garrison,
Burned is his corn and Nigel is undone.
At Berwick-upon-Tweed his head shall fall,
The brightest, bravest, youthfulest of all.
The first brave crocus of the chill young year
From Nigel's grave thrusts forth her flaming spear.
The dying Edward on his captives gloats
And gluts his vengeance, as when Atholl floats
By cruel hazard on Northumbrian coast,
And Edward dying crieth : “ He shall boast
A higher gallows that boasts royal blood.”
So was it done as seemed to Edward good,
And unto Simon Fraser, Wallace friend,
Did Edward's hatred scheme like cruel end.
Crowned, not with laurel, but with periwinkle,
A star in Wallace Sign shall Fraser twinkle.

.

Think now on worst of horrors thou hast known,
Then add to these the martyred patriot's moan,
Then cast an eye on the memorial stone
At Westminster, where Scotland's foe doth rot :
" Here Edward lies, the Hammer of the Scot."
Nought can such cruel deeds in Kings excuse,
And if you seek a contrast, see the Brus.
Brus after Bannockburn and oft before
To gallant foe gave liberty and more—
Loaded with favours many an enemy
That hoped to win base life on bended knee.
Edward by all was loathed, by none gainsaid,
The Brus by all was loved, by all obeyed.
His last command King Edward dying gave :
The Second Edward danceth on his grave.
King Robert whispers : soul and body part :
The Douglas keeps and cherishes his heart,
Doing for love what none will do for fear ;
True love and springtide die not with the year.
But of a lady fair I would a word,
Buchan's fair Countess, prisoned like a bird
Within a cage at Berwick must she dwell.
Thus Edward strives to build for her a hell
And teach to dames how terrible their doom
That cherish other flower than flower of broom.
Thy body in a cage, sweet wretch, he pent,
But crushed for us full sweet he made thy scent.
Most sweet thou caroldest through thy cage bars,
And see thy fame, it soareth to the stars :
White hands that crowned the Brus, brave mind and
heart
That urged thee on to dare the hero's part.

But for the Brus, his lordships Annandale
And Carrick, English lands within the pale,
Gives Edward to his lords : these gifts avail
On earth as doth the papal curse in heaven
To rend from Brus what God Himself had given :
Strong arm to take his own, strong mind to prove,
And more than all, the power to conquer love.
For all men loved the Brus, that dealt with him,
And I might tell of ancient legends dim,
His constancy and shew the spider climb,
A legend soothfast, simple and sublime—
Might of the dame unknown discourse who gave
Shelter and food and forty swordsmen brave,
Of Edward Brus that was of Ireland King
And all aflame, like Phœnix on the wing ;
Might of the Douglas and his “ Larder ” tell—
Fain would I linger on in Douglasdale—
Of John of Lorn and of the sleuthhound true
That tracked its master and the arrow slew,
How Brus escaped and lived to wear the crown,
Not so Lorn’s men that strove to hew him down ;
How Cuthbert lit no beacon on the hill
And yet it burned, and well it happened, not ill ;
Of the great blast upon his horn that blew,
The Brus and Douglas heard afar and knew
The King was come, of how with one good sword
He scattered full two hundred at the ford,
And when his men came up they found the Brus,
His basnet doffed, that blessed the midnight dews,
Of how unto the cottage wife he came
And she received him in King Robert’s name,
Nor guessed at all the traveller was the King.

And—when—she knew, how great her pleasuring !
Brus in the north ! how rage the Brus hath healed
That could not walk, how Comyn's doom is sealed.
The harrying of Buchan !

As the levin
Strikes Brus all Buchan, once to Comyn given,
Burning in righteous wrath upon his way.
Men trembled then, men tremble to this day,
When yet the crofter in the peat reveals
The oak beam charred that Brus' vengeance feels.

These and a many more were joy to sing,
Great deeds for ever newly chronicling,
Since not to sing the new to me is dear,
But turning to the old things all know well
To echo forth with murmur musical
The tides of history in their rise and fall,
And breaking waves between, like a sea-shell.
But here some little part I will rehearse
Of deeds that clamour at the forge of verse.

The Brus sends Edward Brus into the West
Where the men of Galloway ever in unrest
Have joined themselves with England : wild are they
And cruel in the field, but now perfay
There's one abroad shall hunt them all to bay.
O gallant Edward Brus ! Thou bright of eye,
Thou strong of wing, ready all flights to fly,
Thou Conqueror King of Ireland and the Isles,
Thou that no tinge of aught impure defiles ;
Aflame with courage that with fifty men
Chargedst on fifteen hundred ; twice again

And thrice thou camest on with furious blast
Of horn and thunderous hoof until at last
Wild panic took the Southrons and they broke.
Of chivalry was this a right fair stroke.
Farewell thou brave of heart and bright of eye !
We meet at Bannockburn : till then, good-bye !

What of the Douglas ?—Like the wind he was,
That blows now east now west now north across
Scotland, and to and fro he went, but best
He loved to hover round his native nest.
Deep in ancestral forest would he lurk,
Then creeping up as gathered thick the murk
Close to the Castle wall he overpowers
The garrison of his ancestral towers.
Or else he'd match their wit some otherwise :
Whate'er he did 'twas ever a surprize,
As when to drill her child the mother threats
To give it to Black Douglas : " Douglas waits " :
Speaks on the wall a voice : she turns afright
And sees indeed a tall and black-browed knight,
The Douglas self, that thus by escalade
To his own castle hath a visit made,
The Douglas guards them both with pious care
But for those others—evilly they fare.

Mind ye of Brus' venture, when he slew
The Highland ketherans of Lorn, and knew
The bite of evil fortune's wolfish teeth
When strown with Scottish slain was Methven's heath ?
Hear now of Brus and Douglas joined together,
As then for pain they fared, so now—for pleasure.

With veteran troops and all good men's good-will,
They turn on Lorn to render ill for ill.
Thus by the common folk they come to know
Where Lorn is waiting for his ancient foe.
Betwixt Lochs Awe and Etive winds a glen
Along rough shoulders of Ben Cruachin,
Here on the hillside as in days gone by
In ambuscade a many ketherans lie,
But their great chief, too great himself to
strive,
Awaits the victory on Loch Etive,
Within a " lymphad " galley, many-oared,
Upon the loch it floats, the Lord of Lorn aboard.
Now had the King not chanced to know before
Their well-devisèd plot, 'tis like that sore
He had lamented this too venturous quest ;
But knowing well, he speeds atop the crest
By path circuitous no less a knight
Than Douglas with a troop of archers light,
While he moves slowly with his veterans
To meet the horde of murtherous ketherans.
Thorough the narrow pass, where most it narrows,
These hurl down stones and darts and shoot their
arrows
Upon their victims, thinking to surprize ;
Those victims are prepared, but not for sacrifice.
Yelling and springing, down the ketherans leap,
But Brus and his await them and still keep
Their order, till above a loud-blown horn
Astoundment brings unto the men of Lorn,
And to their bodies bodes a muckle pain,
For seldom James the Douglas strikes in vain,

Then Brus and his spring upward, Douglas down ;
Right gallantly they fight and win renown,
Those men of Lorn upon Cruachin Ben,
Between the hammer and the anvil taen.
Which was the anvil ?—Douglas or the Brus ?—
Methinks those ketherans found it hard to choose.
Of even form and metal were the two,
Heroes more real than old Homer knew.
What of the Lord of these brave men that lie
With sightless eyes gazing into the sky ?
It irked him much to see this utter rout,
When he expected, never cared to doubt,
That Brus and Douglas on his lymphad bound
Should grace Dunstaffnage rocky heading ground.
But otherwise had willed the fates perverse
And Lorn must see the bad become the worse.
Safe in Dunstaffnage strong upon the sea,
He thought defy the Brus, but presently
The Brus sits down before Dunstaffnage walls,
A sight which the Castellan's heart appals :
(Whose courage never soaring very high,
When it descended had not far to fly).
Therefore he cometh forth on bended knee
Homage to swear and troth and fealty
To Robert King of Scots, and Douglas smiles
To see him bowed thus low, the Lord of many Isles,

.
As manners vary now from clime to clime,
So were they other in that ancient time ;
Oaths were oft taken and as often broke,
As urged convenience, power, or fortune's stroke.

Now as the churchmen best knew how to win
The Church's pardon for a churchman's sin,
Sware they right willingly allegiance
To England, Scotland, Norroway or France ;
Then changing swore the opposite to gain
More than if unforsworn they should remain.
Now Lamberton and Wishart wore the steel
Beneath their rochets and were counted leal.
How many heroes chronicled in rhyme
Would heroes stay if born a second time ?
Hark to these Bishops swear, whose oaths were taken
As surely as their keeping was forsaken.
The Comyn slain, shall Lamberton refuse
St Andrews' aid unto the slayer Brus ?
The Brus is worsted : Bishop Lamberton
Takes oath to Edward, all he lost hath won.
Lamberton changeth sides and schemes with Brus
And gives the Stewart's son as his excuse.
But Edward's power hath grown, the Bishop swears
To Pembroke's Earl for Edward, then repairs
To Brus' camp and treats with Brus again,
And Edward to the Pope appeals in vain
To punish acts of perjury and treason.
Yea, Lamberton can break an oath in season
With any layman and with any other,
Save perchance Glasco's very holy brother.
Fealty to Edward swears upon the rood
Wishart of Glasco, but his vagrant mood
Marcheth with Balliol, till that princeling fails,
Then quick for Edward he will tack his sails.
Not once to Edward, Wishart swears, but twice,
That nought shall him from the first oath entice !

Wallace and Brus ! Scarce had the Bishop reckoned
Upon two champions ! Oaths the third and second
Must in a trice be broken both together,
And Wishart swears to Brus to serve him ever.
Alas, less bright shine the affairs of Brus,
And as you guess our Bishop cannot choose
But pass to Edward, swearing on his soul
Fealty, and therewith swears he to control
The schemes of Brus and be his surety.
Prosper the Brus, again the Wishart swings ;
The Brus declineth, Wishart is the King's !—
But charged, the Wishart charged ! Ah ! well-
a-day,

With having sworn, the better to betray
The strength of Roxburgh Castle to the Scot.
Who could believe it ?—Edward certès not,
And Glasco's bishop courteously entreats,
Who for the fourth time on the rood repeats
His oath to Edward, which he means to keep
Till he shall send his Scots to carry sheep,
Or any other beast alive or dead
That they shall find on England's pastures bred.
Grim Edward conquers ; Wishart once again
Veers with the wind and glitters with the vane.
Full strange it seems, from Edward hath he back
Those earthly treasures which his soul doth lack,
And swears most solemnly, time sixth and last,
Fealty to Edward—and forget the past !
Behold the fame of Brus to heaven soar,
The Bishop turns and fealty swears once more
Unto the Brus, and Edward seeks in vain
To tempt him from his Scottish oath again.

Now Brus is strong the Bishops' patriot,
Swearing he'll die, as he hath lived, a Scot.
Thus in his later day the Bishop prayed :
" To fight with England equals a Crusade."

One geste the more I tell, of how the Brus
St Johnston¹ took by force of arms and ruse.
For six long weeks he had in vain sat down
And strait beset that proud disloyal town.
All round about with towers girt it was,
And deep and broad the water in the fosse,
That Brus by no means might contrive to cross.
The garrison, half English and half Scots,
Well knew their foe and guarded feeble spots
Both night and day, and who passed o'er the water
Most certain were of very present slaughter.
Therefore the King gave order break array,
Strike tents and win from this dour town away.
For eight long days his army lay perdu,
But on the ninth night heavy was the dew
And mirk the air, and yet a little wind
Stirred in the reeds that rustled them behind,
As Robert Brus, the hero and the King,
Crept silent with a few unto the brink
Of this same fosse, and Brus set forth to wade,
Who going first, but little ripple made,
Moving most softly. Of those following him
The tall might wade, but all the short must swim.
Thus as they passed with hooks and ropes of scale,
Marvelled thereat a Gascon knight, for pale
Were many knights, quoth he, at such emprise
As now achieves this King before mine eyes.

¹ Perth.

My King he is not, but a knight must win
Where leads the way himself a crownèd King.
Thus as he spake ; he entered in the fosse
And safely too that Gascon came across
And with King Robert scaled the sleep-bound wall,
And Gascon shout shall sleeping men appal
As the King leads them o'er the bastion,
And they do fall upon the garrison.
Spared are the English that are prisoner taken,
Swift on the Scot is righteous vengeance slaken.
To spare the English foe aye sought the Brus,
But for the homebred foe found ready noose.

Behold the terror of the Brus' name
Blazing through England as the furnace flame.
Through England's north, the Brus, the Douglas rode,
And Chester city pleased them for abode.
Then Durham's terror melted all to gold,
Then other counties were as Durham bold,
That passing south not there the Scot should tarry,
But southern shires and nigher London harry !
Then many doubters leaped the Rubicon,
Then England's king was Piers Gaveston,
Then Scotsmen's deeds like a vast river spate
Were swelled the more by rivulets waxen great,
For humble folk now sought the halls of fame,
And the Black Douglas blots not Binny's name.

Linlithgow's Castle standeth on a mound
Whence danger 's visible for miles around,
And scarce a murmur riseth from the plain
Save Binny walking by his loaded wain,

That hums a merry tune, an humble swain.
'Tis come right nigh the Castle gate, his wain,
And at a word from Binny watchers raise
The heavy-hinged portcullis and the hay 's
Shaken and jolted as the gate they gain—
And Binny hums a tune beside his wain—
And though the draught be light the oxen strain :
Ay ! though the load be only summer's grass,
Straining below the portcullis they pass—
And Binny stays his tune beside the wain.
Sudden the waggoner cuts the ropes in twain,
Sudden the hay leaps up like armèd men,
Sudden the English garrison is slain,
Sudden Linlithgow Castle Binny's ta'en,
That hummed a merry tune beside his wain.

.
'Tis Fasten's E'en and Roxburgh Castle towers
Reëcho song and laughter that outpours
From the great hall where feasts the governor,
And round him many gallant knights there are,
All English-born, but all a Gascon he,
Marked out by Edward for his bravery,
His craft of war—and eke his flattery.
De Fiennes, 'twas thus he hight, doth make good
cheer,
For the morrow brings the ashes of the year.
Therefore with song and wine and friendly bout,
They see the sad time in, the glad time out.
Their revelry reëchoes from the towers,
Where sentinels must tread and count the hours,
Cursing their lot that bids them lonely stay
And gloomy gaze on gloom when all are gay.

“ Those beasts be late abroad this night, I trow,”
Quoth one of these, and in the park below
Points where vast bulks toward the castle move,
Pausing the while to graze as should a drove.
“ I’ faith they be,” makes answer then the other—
Then do they fall a-pitying one another.
Meanwhile within, De Fiennes with merry shout
Seeth the sad time in, the glad time out,
Meanwhile those obscure kine move ever near
And yet more near the castle. “ Didst thou hear
A sound below ? ” quoth one, “ Nay,” quoth the other—
Then fell again lamenting with his brother.
Meanwhile the foremost of the drove hath come
Unto the wall and lo, he is not dumb,
But speaking in a human voice commands,
And like the horse of Troy hath many heads and hands.
The Douglas self, for it is he, climbs first,
Then all the drove, for glory all athirst,
Cast off the peltry and are men-at-arms,
And climbing one by one, a voice alarms
The sentry that comes running to the place
And finds—the Douglas : mayhap hath he grace
Of God, but ere he can achieve to cry,
The Douglas dagger speedeth him on high—
The others then win up—and quick they slay
Those other sentinels that bar their way.
De Fiennes hath raised his goblet in the hall,
About to quaff, when lo ! the shout of all
Most awful, sounds without : “ Douglas ! ha ! A
Douglas !
A Douglas ! ”

And the torches reel and sway

As Douglas and his men-at-arms rush in
And all is blood and strife that erst was din.
They slay, they slay, till England cries : " We yield,"
And Douglas spares, where Edward would have killed.
What of the governor, the gay de Fiennes ?
A sword he snatcheth up and one to seven
Fighteth upon the steps until his blood
Drowneth his eyeballs in its crimson flood
From wounded brow ; but Douglas saves and tends
His foe, and safely back to England sends
A gay goss-hawk that tried an eagle's flight,
Not long to cumber earth, a hapless wight.

.

Thus Douglas knocks the towers of Roxburgh o'er,
While in the Isle of Man the King makes war
On the Macdougalls, foes that were before
Lords of all Galloway, and very soon
These crave their lives and get them—as a boon.
But Edward Brus, he of the phoenix wings,
Scourgeth the north and Edinburgh brings,
And now Dundee to right allegiance.
Then upon Stirling's strength he makes advance,
A mighty Castle standing on its rock,
Greatest of strengths, forbye Caerlaverock.
Then Mowbray, when now winter-long the siege,
Lacked corn and victuals and his crownèd liege
Sending nor men nor word, his crafty mind
Discovered where in Edward Brus to find
A spear-hole in the armour. Then he cries
To Edward Brus, the knight, in knightly wise :
" O grant a truce, and if no succour come
By midsummer, upon a knight's true word,

As knight to knight, by Arthur overheard,
By Richard's Lion Heart, the paladin,
By wounds of God, by beard of Saladin,
I, Thomas Mowbray, swear to Edward Brus
To yield up Stirling Castle."

To refuse

Such knightly gage, to Edward Brus' mind
Were almost to play traitor to his kind.
Therefore, Achilles-like, he signs the truce,
And Mowbray for his King thus gains the use
Of all the Maydays, all the eager spring,
To gather England's might and all to fling
On Scotland—and though lads and lassies fought—
Though white beards and old wives and infants sought
The field of battle—Scotland all together
Would fail of half the men that England's horn can
gather.

When now the Brus had seen the subtle snare
That Mowbray set and that all unaware
His brother Edward entered, waxed his ire,
For easy were it ere the spring expire
To starve Sir Philip Mowbray till perforce
He should throw ope the gates, but now his course
By brother's plighted word is all fenced in
And he must bide until the summer's in,
Until King Edward shall have time to call
From all of England, Flanders, Wales and all
His vast dominions far ayont the seas
The very marrow of their chivalries,
And tempt with English gold to join with these
A many thousand more, and all to crush
One northern land which bended as the rush

Before his sire, set straight by Brus but now :
Eftsoons the Brus hath cause to crease his brow.
All this was seen at once by Brus the King,
Though Edward Brus saw nought, but now we bring
The question to an issue ; shall he stay
By brother's word or follow England's way ?
Certès, before, King Edward First had sworn
The like oath at Dundee and was forsworn,
But Brus was not as Edward King, but loth
To sully Brus' fame with broken oath.
So when his ire was passed, he clasped the hand
That Edward Brus held out and said : " We stand
Or fall together by thy plighted word."
This when from Robert Brus his brother heard,
He fell upon his knee and fain had spoken
In words his thanks, but spake them better broken
In little tears as he felt the whole
Of his great brother kindle to his soul.
Yea, Edward Brus staked Scotland on a throw,
Turn ye the leaf, the dice's fall to know.

The Eve of Battle

ONCE in the life of a man is it given to grasp
his fate,
Be it a love or a crown, be it a cause or a
creed.

Early in youth it may come, mid-course, or it may
be late,

Rosy with fingers of dawn, trailing a tragical weed.
Careless mayhap, unready, too timid or rash too soon !
Gone it is gone for aye, vanished the infinite
boon.

Vain are all lamentations now : “ Ah ! had I then but
known

The time to strike, the time to pause, now all had
been my own.”

Ye may tread for ever the place,
Ye shall never know it again,
That smile of the loved one's face,
That chance of the crown to gain,
Ye shall seek it in vain.

Once in a country's life, in its life of a thousand years,
The past rolls up in a cloud, ready to shatter and
whelm

One or the other side ; vain now are hopes and fears,
Now is the moment to do ; whom have ye placed
at the helm ?

Come ! it is come for Scotland the moment that
measures all :

Shall the Scot be a proud man and free ? Shall
he be little and fall ?

Nay, we shall see how Scotland fares, nay, we shall
know full well

Who rules the rudder with his hand, whose voice is like
a bell

Calling and all shall obey,
Striking, they rise no more,
Terrible, gentle and gay,
Hero that all men adore
We have Brus at the Nore.

Battle of Bannockburn

EDWARD Second of England, lapped in
unglorious ease,
Was stirred with the spirit of battle when
he heard of Stirling's siege,
And he summoned a feudal levy of barons of all
degrees,
And with each his horses and arms and with
each his bondman and liege.
He ordered the counties of England and the conquered
land of Wales
To furnish a further levy and a fleet of forty sails,
And to O'Connor, Irish Prince, and to De Burgh he
wrote,
And to the Bishop of Constance, and bade Argyle to
float
With his fleet and be Admiral
Over the northern seas,
Bade Berwick to be for all
Meeting-place till he shall please
Bring the Scot to his knees.

Knights sailed from the port of Flanders, came forth
the Low Countrees,
From Almayn, from the Duchy, from Poictiers,
from Bayonne,

That the back of every breaker through all the northern
seas

Was broke with the weight of warriors in steely
morian,

Hasting to join their valours with great Plan-
tagenet—

Though mightily they hasten, 'tis little praise
they'll get!

But to the Earls of Hereford and Gloster Edward
gave

To lead the vaward of his array, being most
wise and brave ;

And Sir Giles de Argentine,

Most gallant of cavaliers,

With Sir Aymer of long line

At the rein of the King careers,

Who shall banish his fears.

Mighty and rich is England and an hundred thousand
strong

Were less by far than the muster of all that
armèd throng ;

All the great vassals of England and the lesser barons all,

And forty thousand horsemen and as many
bows to gall

The flanks of the "Scottish rebel," waggon and car
and tent,

Armourers, smiths and masons, another armament.

With these to do his bidding, a splendid throng, God
wot,

The mighty King of England rode forth to crush the
Scot.

Battle of Bannockburn

With his Queen rode forth on his way,
Lincoln and York he passed ;
At St Albans paused to pray ;
By the sound of his trumpet's blast
He's at Berwick at last.

But long ere he passed the Border, had Brus right
balanced and weighed
The weight of the battle's chances and the choice of
his captains made ;
Douglas and Edward and Randolph whose word had
brought them here, ,
And the bonnie High Stewart of Scotland, a callant
of twenty year.
To each was his charge allotted, to Randolph fell the
vaward,
The right to his brother Edward, the left to the Douglas
and Stewart.
With forty thousand fighting men, five hundred men
ahorse,
The Scot an hundred thousand met by the Bannock's
bickering course.
But with Robert the King nigh the centre,
With the Highlander ready to fall
To the right or the left as the venture
Or the need of the battle call,
They shall fear not at all.

The Brus hath chosen the battle-field, no wiser a choice
could be,
In the Park by the Castle of Stirling, planted
with many a tree,

With the marsh leading on unto it, blue flowrets in the
field,

By the Bannock-burn on the right wing, old nature's
brawling shield.

Here must the horse of the foeman find ill to gallop i'
faith—

Yea many an one that enters shall gallop the
road to death.

But on the left wing Stirling's towers frown menace in
the rear,

And though Mowbray's word holds danger back,
Brus thinks on other gear.

Green is the field by the city,

Smooth as for steeds to race,

Now with calthrop of iron and pit he

Bids dig, spike, then cover its face,

Smooth to leave not a trace.

Fasted the Scots by Stirling on the vigil of St John,
And the King on the Sabbath morning, when the mass
was over and done,

Spake thus unto the army : “ If any be wavering,
Let him take what road he listeth, he shall have no
hindrancing.”

Then a lion's roar made answer, like the falls of the
Clyde in spate :

“ We do all abide the battle.” Then they sought their
banners straight,

With Edward Brus upon the right, Earl Randolph
in the vaward,

With James the Douglas on the left, with Walter the
Lord High Stewart,

They ranged them, and lo! the Highlands
Towered with the King behind,
Argyll, Kintyre and the Islands
The King with his fame can bind,
As the foemen shall find.

Round the first of the battle's doings clings the scent of
a fallen rose,
Which fell from the chaplet of Randolph and was
gathered by his foes,
For he spyed not Sir Robert Clifford, as the King had
bade him spy,
That crept to relieve the Castle, and perdy was come
right nigh,
When the King turned sudden on Randolph and
pointing : " Nephew of mine
Behold a rose hath fallen from that rosy chaplet of
thine."
Swift as a swan-winged arrow he speeds to retrieve
his fame,
And all his hero's heart's afire and red his cheeks for
shame !

Foursquare his spearmen face,
Furious gallop their foes,
Clash ! but the Scot keeps his place—
Clash ! but the Scot overthrows—
Will he rescue his rose ?

Upspake then Sir Robert Clifford : " We must compass them round about,
We are double the Scotsmen's number and they
light-armed and afoot."

So they cantered away and wheeling divided their
troop in four,

Then at the gallop charging the battle raged once
more.

When now Sir James the Douglas, as he stood at the
Brus's side,

Marked Randolph and his spearmen, how sorely they
were tried,

He craved that he might go forward and somewhat of
succour bring.

"Thou shalt not change my battle-ground for
Randolph," quoth the King.

Meanwhile on their ears comes ringing

The clash of the sword and the spear,

The mêlée is swaying and swinging,

Steeds maddened with wounds and with
fear

Plunge forward and rear.

Then the Douglas cries to the monarch: "My life is
thine till death,

But I may not stand by slothful, while Randolph
perisheth."

With that he speeds to the rescue, but as he draws
more nigh,

He beholds the English waver, then break, and some
to fly.

"Halt!" to his men calls Douglas, "for Randolph
shall win the fray;

Let us not with needless succour take aught of his
fame away."

Right gallant spoke, O Douglas ! let Randolph wreak
alone

His victory o'er fearful odds and thus his fault atone.

Now when Randolph marks them waver

More furious yet he throws

Men, body and soul together—

They shatter and scatter the foes—

He hath won back his rose !

Mounted upon a palfrey, meanwhile the Brus pricked on
To view the left and vaward, now Douglas and Ran-
dolph gone ;

But behold the vaward of England of a sudden come in
sight

With the Earls of Gloster and Hereford, and before
them an armoured knight,

Sir Henry de Bohun, by a bowshot, on his war-horse
caracoled,

And he knew the Brus by his helmet with its lofty
crown of gold.

Thereat he gave his battle cry and galloped on the Brus
Who saw him come and might and should draw back
with just excuse,

Being mounted upon a palfrey,

For he thought not to fight that day,

Yet the knight in his bosom felt he

Give the King of Scots no stay—

He must e'en to the fray.

Therefore he cantered forward, as the knight in full
career

Came thundering down upon him, and O but he came
near !

And the whole array of Scotland watched close and
caught its breath,

For who should lead them to victory, if the King went
first to death ?

Like a tidal wave in a river came the knight upon the
King,

Who calm as in the tilt-yard met his furious oncoming,
Parried with ease his lance-thrust and as he galloped by
Rose high up in his stirrups. By God, the knight shall
die !

Swinging his ax of battle
At a blow cleft basnet and brain—
Dead fell the knight from saddle—
Dead ere he touched the plain—
Then the King turned rein.

Then with a mighty shout and a clashing of spears the
Scot

Ran on the English line, but the King vouchsafed
them not,

For the night was coming apace and he bade them rest
and pray ;

They should fight their fill on the morn. And i' faith
at the break of day

Each Scot stands firm in his place and the Abbot of
Inchaffray

Passeth along their lines and the Scotsmen kneel and
pray,

Which when King Edward seeth : quoth he to one
hard by :

“ These rebels plead for mercy : they will not fight,
but fly.”

Quoth Sir Gilbert, Sire, indeed,
As thou sayest it well may be,
That the Scots for mercy plead,
But they ask it of God, not thee :
They will die or be free."

"Good," answereth Edward the King and straight
bids sound the charge,
And the English vaward meets the Scots 'mid clash of
spear and targe.
Then hail the arrows of England, like hail that the
tempest drives,
And the vaward led by Randolph in the ocean of
England dives ;
For the Scots that are led by Randolph are lost as in
the sea
In the vasty body of Englishmen that compass them
round, perdie !
Then Sir James the Douglas and the Stewart bring up
the other wing
And like the smithy of God Thor these three great
battles ring,
And it's "Ha! for St George and England!"
As they fall on the Scottish square ;
"St Andrew! St Andrew! for Scotland!"
Meets that in the air,
And the Scot stands fair.

Then the Brus when he sees how the archers gall sends
his five hundred horse,
Who fall from the flank upon them and they die or
flee, perforce,

And though the English stubborn fight yet the eagle's
eye of the Brus
Sees where they plunge right recklessly, sees the leaders
that they lose.
Then with his fourth great battle, the Highlanders and
the Isles,
Joins the Brus the other three battles, where they fight
amid gory piles :
Pennon and spear and banner, scarves torn and
smeared with blood,
And banners rising, falling, steeds plunging amid the
mud.

See the King and his Phoenix brother,
Douglas, Randolph and the Stewart,
All fighting nigh one another,
Great ships that give battle moored !
Which the glory secured ?

Neither the one nor the other, the glory is over them
all,
But who be the new men a-coming whose sight doth
the English appal ?
'Tis the serving men and the followers that hasten over
the law
To get a sight of the fighting, that fills the English
with awe.
Yet the Brus with his eye of eagle sees them waver and
cries, " They come,"
Then the Brus with the Brus' war-cry charges furiously
home.
And where their King shall lead them there's ne'er
a Scot but goes,

And the whole long line of Scotsmen just breaks their
Southron foes.

Vainly they strive to rally
When King Edward turns to fly,
What matter if Gloster sally,
If an Argentine will die ?
We have conquered, they fly !

Dryshod across the Bannock burn the gallant Scot
shall tread,

For the English on that fatal field left thirty
thousand dead ;

The Earl of Gloster and Clifford and Edmund the
Seneschal,

Two hundred knights, seven hundred squires are
few amid them all.

Never before nor after hath England the like thing
known—

Waterloo, Creçy, Trafalgar—Bannockburn stands
alone.

So here's to the Brus that led
And here's to the hero Scot,
And here's to all brave that bled,
To the Wallace forget-me-not
Blooms yet on the spot !

After Bannockburn

DOUGLAS IN PURSUIT OF KING EDWARD.

PLANTAGENET Edward of England
Flees southward on wings of the wind,
The Douglas espies him in panic that flies
him

And he thunders close behind.

With the Stewart by Torwood he gallops,

Meets Sir Laurence Abernethy :

Quoth Sir Laurence : " Where be, Sir, King Edward ? "

" They flee, Sir, "

Quoth the Douglas, " Join thou with me ;

If thou seekest the King of England,

See him crave of the Douglas grace,

Who with horse five hundred by Torwood thundered,

But a passing moment's space."

Quoth Sir Laurence to James of Douglas :

" O Douglas I join with thee,

I will find a pardon of Brus for guerdon,

If I help take those that flee."

Thereat swears Sir Laurence to Douglas

His troth to the Brus, the King ;

Thus with words right few can the Douglas anew

To the trail of the fugitive cling.

They come on the King by Linlithgow,

They could charge, on the Southron flight,

But too few they be for the jeopardy,
Right great is the Southron's might.
But they follow right nigh them fleeing,
That dare not to break array,
For if any draw bridle there's a Scot at his side will
Or take him alive or slay.
Thus King Edward to Winchburgh gallops,
Where King Edward draws rein to bait,
But the Scots bait anigh him, close watch him and ply
him,
On the least of his motions wait.
When the King leaps again on his saddle,
Leaps the Douglas again to horse !
And they gallop afar to the towers of Dunbar
Where they halt on their perilous course.
For the constable here is Earl Patrick,
Who openeth wide to the King,
And the Douglas turns rein, he hath followed in vain,
And back to the Brus he will win.
When the dust of the Douglas' going
Long hath settled upon the highway,
Ventures Edward afloat in a wee sailing boat,
That came forth with so mighty array.
Thence he saileth to Bamborough Castle,
Where he's safe, back in England once more,
Ah ! had Douglas the men, he'd have taken him then,
For whom a worse fate is in store.
Thus befell to the Leopard of England
That harried the Right Lion Scots :
Till the twain wed together they'll e'en bicker ever—
Till they're linked with the nuptial knots.

Robert Brus on the Field after the Battle

NOW greater had been their number
That galloped with good Sir James,
But around the Rock of Stirling
Yet cluster illustrious names,
And the King that is prudent ever
(Save when the knight's afield)
Sends forth a stark Scots company
To ken if the Southron yield.
They yield them to his mercy
Of barons full a score,
A mighty throng of yeomen,
Of knights there were sixty and four.
Come forth from Castle of Stirling,
Yields Mowbray up the keys;
Barons and knights and yeomen,
Brus hath them to his peace.
More human than Plantagenet
Was Robert Brus our King,
That reverently used the dead
And kindly the living.
The young dead Earl of Gloster
Bids lay in holy kirk
And all the rites of Christendom
He bids around him work ;

154 Robert Brus on the Field after the Battle

To Gloster and brave Lord Clifford
 Rendereth all honours due,
Then bids convoy to England home,
 To rest beneath the yew.
But when the Southron yield them,
 And the Scot hath nought to dread,
Speaks the Brus the word that slips them
 Glean spoil well merited.
Vessels of gold and of silver
 And treasure of kists and gear
Upon the ground all strown around
 They gather far and near.
“ League-long our waggons stretched them,”
 Quoth Thomas of Malmesbury,
“ O piteous day, O day of dule,
 O England’s misery ! ”
Two hundred thousand pieces
 Were in Brus’ treasure told,
Which if Bannockburn happed yesterday,
 Were three millions of our gold.
For the Earl of Hereford taken
 That in Castle Bothwell hid,
Must King Robert’s daughter, sister, queen,
 Their Southron jailers bid.
On the morrow at gray of dawning
 Rose the King as wont he was,
And o’er the ground he had made renowned
 He set him forth to cross.
Sudden from out a coppice
 Upsprung a blood-stained knight,
He kneeled before the monarch,
 And his eyes with hope were bright.

“ Who art thou ? ” quoth King Robert
 “ And who hath taken thee ? ”
“ Sir Marmaduke de Twenge my name,
 And I crave thy clemency.”
“ Sir Marmaduke, I know thee,”
 Made answer Brus the King,
“ Methinks thou art the self-same knight
 That Stirling Bridge made ring
With stroke on stroke, and only
 Of all that ventured there
Escaped the sword of Wallace
 Who most that sword did dare.
Rise up—And see thou tend him,”
 Quoth the King to Sir James of Luss ;
“ This night an thou wilt, Sir Marmaduke,
 Thou shalt e’en sup with Us.”
Then Sir Marmaduke, the starveling,
 Ventured a pleasant jest,
 For the sight of good King Robert
 Brought the heart back to his breast.
“ Sire,” quoth he, “ much I thank thee,
 For with thee to make good cheer
With the good red wine and venison
 To me it is more dear,
Than to hang with neck in halter,
 As was King Edward’s use
With the Scots he took in battle,
 Yea, the way of King Robert Brus
Methinks hath more to please me,
 I sup with thee this day,
To the King of Scots I yield my sword,
 Faith ! ’twas a pretty fray.”

156 Robert Brus on the Field after the Battle

Thereat King Robert smiling,
 Quoth, " See thou tend him well."
 At the King's right hand Sir Marmaduke
 That night doth feast and tell
 Full many a knightly venture ;
 The King of Scots and Hearts
 Laughs, listens and Sir Marmaduke
 Loaded with gifts departs.
 King Robert laughs the morrow
 When Baston Carmelite
 Is haled before him captive,
 The monk that should indite
 The geste of Edward Second
 In verses leonine ¹—
 How England wins the victory,
 And how the Scots must pine.
 For Baston friar had Edward
 Carried from south to north,
 That when the Scots were vanquished
 His fame be published forth
 By Baston friar, his mouthpiece,
 To the corners of the earth :
 Such minstrel as was Baston
 Was Edward's valour worth.
 Now the Brus, when he hears the verses,
 Loud laughs and claps his thigh :
 Quoth he, " 'Twere sin from Edward King
 To keep such minstrelsy."
 But hark thee, Master Baston,
 Now, now shallst thou write anew

¹ Leonine verses are Latin hexameters. The verses by Baston may be found in Burton's "History of Scotland."

How the Scots it was that vanquished,
 Then add these words thereto :
 " Behold the Muse of England
 Hath bred ayont the Tweed :
 The Lion Scots he mounted her,
 These cubs be of his breed."
 These shallst thou bear to Edward—
 Not much to change hast need—
 How 'tis not we, but the Southrons, flee—
 'Tis a right simple rede."
 Thus done may Friar Baston
 Speed on his home-faring :
 Nor missive nor those lion cubs
 He gave unto his King.
 Thus laughed the King of Scotland !
 Such vengeance he took,
 Leaving to Kings of England
 Halter and flames and hook.
 Passeth the young High Stewart
 With the King to the Western Isles ;
 Not subtle is the grammarye
 Those Islanders beguiles.
 For strong their faith that never
 They will fall to mortal hand,
 Ere on his ship their conqueror
 Come sailing o'er the land.
 Therefore across the Tarbert
 The Brus bids haul his boats,
 Then Lord of the Isles unchallenged
 In Jura's Sound he floats.

.

158 Robert Brus on the Field after the Battle

Now Walter the Stewart of Scotland,
 Great Chief at twenty and one
 Gat the Lordship of the Marches
 When Bannockburn was won ;
 And when the Royal Ladies
 From England's prisons came,
 'Twas the Stewart on the Border
 That first did welcome them.
 Most fair among the maidens,
 Beheld of Thames or Tweed,
 Is the Princess Marjory, child of Brus,
 Rides the Stewart by her steed.
 Hark ! Paisley bells are ringing,
 Big with immortal news :
 'Tis the gallant young Stewart of Scotland
 Weds the Princess Marjorie Brus.
 Proud is the Stewart of Scotland
 And proud is Brus the King,
 As a rose his wife and daughter,
 As a white rose in spring.
 Ah ! bright as day of springtide,
 But brief as day of June,
 Their lives that gat our Stewart kings—
 Most fair must fade most soon.
 But fiery was the planet
 Reigned at the Stewart's birth,
 And we shall see his pedigree
 Declare in deeds his worth.

.

But how the King's great brother,
 The Phoenix Edward Brus,

Hath the crown of Ireland on his head,
 How sendeth blazing news
 Unto his royal brother,
 Praying for men and arms,
 And how the King loved peril well,
 How free of war's alarms
 Now lay his bonny Scotland,
 How the Douglas and the Stewart
 He left for Regents in his place
 And sailed away to leeward.
 And again a war in Ireland
 With England how they waged
 I tell not now nor heedless how
 This Phoenix rash engaged
 Where'er the Southron tempted—
 Ay ! fought where'er he came :
 The Phoenix hath consumed away
 All save his glorious name.

.

But hark ! The bells are pealing,
 For the Princess Marjory
 Hath borne a bairn unto the Stewart,
 Robert, the King to be.
 But lo, what ails the pealing ?
 The bells peal not, but toll,
 And weeping choirs in chorus sing
 A dirge for her sweet soul.
 Faring from Paisley Abbey
 To the Castle of Renfrew,
 Her palfrey slipped and fell with her :—
 She died not ere she knew

160 Robert Brus on the Field after the Battle

She had borne a King to Scotland,
 Nor yet without the smile
 That flickered round her paly lips
 And lingered for a while ;
 And round the Stewart's fingers
 Her ivory fingers cling,
 Whose life hath come full circle
 Within her wedding ring.

.
 Now to the King came missives
 From the Twenty Second John,
 The Pope that fled the Vatican
 And dwelt at Avignon.
 These bare a superscription
 That much misliked the King :
 " To Robert Brus that styles himself,
 As he were Scotland's King."
 Quoth Brus : " Among my barons
 A many Bruses be,
 And eke the name of Robert Brus
 Is not alone for me."
 Therefore take back these missives,
 I will not break their seal,
 That the secrets of some Robert Brus
 Beneath their crest conceal.
 Say I am King of Scotland
 To the Twenty Second John.
 That bears himself as Pope of Rome,
 Dwelling at Avignon.
 I rede ye master legate
 Henceforth have better care,

How coming to a foreign land
 Its King and folk ye dare.
 Thereat the Cardinal legate
 For pride puffs out his gills,
 Draws forth a parchment from his pouch
 And all his task fulfils ;
 Ordering between the kingdoms
 For two years' space a truce—
 Handeth the sealed bulls to the King,
 Inscribed " To Robert Brus."
 Thereat a sudden rumour,
 Like to a stormy sea,
 Causeth the legate turn about
 And cease his homily.
 Then to the King imploring
 He asks of Robert Brus
 Safe conduct back to England.
 " Safe conduct I refuse,
 But get ye gone, false legate,
 That art bought with England's gold,
 Know thou that cam'st to barter,
 That Scotland ne'er was sold,"
 Made answer to the legate
 Robert the First the King—
 And ill befell that haughty priest
 Upon his wayfaring.
 Yet may we read the missive
 Wherein the prelate mourned
 His sufferings on his home-faring,
 How " the Lord Robert " scorned
 Amenities of intercourse
 Well known at Avignon,

162 Robert Brus on the Field after the Battle

Perused no missive, brake no seal,
 How hardly was he gone
 Ten furlongs of his journey,
 When lusty caitiffs sprung
 From out the forest, stript him bare,
 Naked and shivering flung
 To cower upon the open road,
 A scandal unto all ;
 Right heavy on the impious Scot
 The hand of heaven should fall.
 Thus maketh end the prelate—
 With this will some agree—
 That rumour runs those caitiffs four
 Had Brus's warranty.
 Certès those self-same missives
 Of the Twenty-Second John,
 Those curses sealed, those interdicts,
 Writ out at Avignon,
 Were opened by King Robert
 What time the legate's weed
 Was such as Father Adam ware
 Before the Serpent's rede.
 The triple-tiered tiara,
 The terror of Almayn,
 The scourge of France, the Emperor's dread,
 The King of Kings of Spain,
 Hath found in one small country
 A King his folk adores,
 Harmless around whose lofty brows
 The papal thunder roars.
 No arrogance, no godlessness
 Was Robert the King the Brus's,

In Holy Kirk kneels he on knee,
 No piety refuses,
But when the Holy Father
 Draws Edward Second's car,
Oh ! then the Brus makes Popes to know
 The stuff that Scotsmen are.
To-day when wand of knowledge
 Turneth old powers to dross,
Mayhap it seemeth but a toy,
 The Pope of Rome to cross.
Potent and rich was England,
 Immense was Bannockburn,
'Twas more in thirteen hundred
 The papal curse to spurn.

Siege of Berwick

A H ! Berwick by the banks of Tweed, that
is the key to hold,
By whom would warrant Scotland's
peace or taste of England's gold !

The English garrison is strong, but after Bannockburn
Full often toward its frowning towers the mind of Brus
shall turn.

The English garrison is strong, the governor full stern :
That dog at last will bite his hand whose heel too oft
doth spurn.

Thus came it that an Englishman who wed a Scottish
lass,
Rough-handled by the governor, unto the Scots did
pass.

Open before King Robert Brus his aching pride he laid
And for a balm to heal it, the garrison betrayed.
How Randolph and the Douglas achieved the escalade,
And springing o'er the barbican how made successful
raid,

I view and pass, and how the Brus came up in time to
save

His fiery lieutenants—for the governor was brave,
And seeing they were but a few fell on them one by
one—

I view and pass, and how the Brus when Berwick's
strength was won

Gave quarter unto all and here as ever, like the sun,
Shone upon all and burned but those that ventured to
defy

In open field, with arms displayed, his awful majesty,
Passing I view and here make pause, for here the Brus
took pause,

Leaning upon the battlement and gazing o'er the
laws.

Then turning toward the seaward side, thus to the
Stewart spake :

“ More strong his heart that holdeth must be than his
doth take :

Say, hast thou heart to watch by day, ever at night to
wake,

Hast thou the lion's heart in thee, the cunning of the
snake ? ”

“ Sire,” quoth the Stewart, “ by God's will I have—
for Scotland's sake.”

“ A lad thou wast at Bannockburn, yet overtopped
thy peers,

And a moment on the field of war weighs as a score of
years.

Fain would I hold this fortalice, right fain spare
Berwick's town,

The key that openeth England, the pearl of Scotland's
crown,

Nor, as with other strengths I did, throw Berwick
hurtling down.

Say, art thou strong to hold the place, to hold it or to
die ? ”

(The Brus clapped Stewart's shoulders.)

Quoth Stewart, “ That am I.”

Oh ! when he heard those gallant words, the Brus his
heart obeyed ;

He kissed the cheek his daughter kissed, then gave the
accolade,

As on his dear son's shoulder his royal hand he laid.

But ere he passed to England, with victuals for a year
And men-at-arms he filled the place and store of war-
like gear ;

Springalds and cranes, balistaries, he fixed upon the
wall,

Johannes Crab the Fleming appointed over all,

More cunning than all other in gins that break or
throw ;

Bowmen both of the long cloth-yard and of the steel
cross-bow

At every embrasure he set, with piles of pitch and tow.
Thus Brus munitioned Berwick, love added somewhat
more—

An hundred gallant gentlemen, the Stewart's quarter-
ings bore.

This being thus and all forearmed, King Robert bade
farewell,

And like an eagle from the lift on northern England
fell :

Wark Castle, Harbottle he stormed, Scarborough and
Skipton burned,

And having vengeance wreaked on these, majestically
returned,

Driving their sheep before him, and eke the human
drove

Of those that once possessed the same—for ransom, as
behave.

Now when Caernarvon's Edward had vainly craved a
truce,

He summoned all his levy and many dared refuse,
Yet as a Dragon on the land, by sea Leviathan
His coils he wound round Berwick town : Leviathan
began.

For on St Mary's Eve his fleet loomed in the estuary,
And all its masts and ropes and stands teemed as an
apple tree

With warriors, armed, that bridge and chain and
grappling-iron bare,
And sailing upward on the tide, right grim their faces
were.

But smiling stood the Lord High Stewart upon the
long low wall,
And when the Scots beheld his face came confidence
to all :

Those hacked they down with halbert and with Loch-
aber ax

That strove to fix their ladders ; for those that made
attacks

Perched, like to birds, atop the mast, within a hanging
boat,

And with a drawbridge ready on air that seemed to
float,

The archers as they sailed most nigh sped arrow and
sped bolt—

And of their soaring courages those fowls began to
moult.

Then sword-in-hand the Stewart made landward a sortie
And drave them back within their trench, while those
toward the sea

Turned with the ebbing of the tide, save one that ran
aground :
Fired by the Scots in smoke and flames to heaven its
evil wound.
Thus happed it on St Mary's Eve, and Edward six days
waited,
Yet purposed he to come again with malice unabated.
Now since he might not drop from air, nor storm by
escalade,
He thought to burrow 'neath the walls with pick-ax,
hoe and spade.
For this he bade contrive with boards and hides a vast
machine,
Which in its monstrous belly hid full fourscore men,
I ween ;
And over this did scaffolds rise high as to overtop
The city's walls, and ladders and ropes withal to drop,
And men-at-arms and archers he stationed for to
shoot,
When those within the sow's belly should issue forth
to root.
To greet this grunting monster is now the Stewart's
care,
Who with Johannes Crab his craft doth pretty gear
prepare :
Balistaries and springalds and iron chains with hooks
To grip the sow, and fire-faggots and balls of blazing pitch
To hurl upon that monster when it shall come in reach.
This being done, his post to each upon the wall the
Stewart
Marks out and sees with his own eyes that all within's
assured.

Then with the warriors of his house, that are his
bodyguard,

Moving along the battlements, he keepeth watch and
ward.

The English trumpets sound at dawn, and resolute
they march,

And fill the fosse and ladders fix, though furious the
discharge

From mangonel and crossbow and not more nigh they
win.

But when the sun is high in heaven, above the dust and
din

King Edward gives the order and all is still, for now
Teeming with all her litter rolls on the monstrous sow.
Upon the battlements the Stewart and Crab together
stand,

And Crab waits till the Stewart shall beckon with his
hand.

He signs and the balistary a mighty rock outflings,
But high above that monstrous sow Icarian flight it
wings.

Again he signs, another rock hurled forth ploughs up
the ground

Before the sow and digs a pit full fourteen paces
round.

With Atlas in their brawny arms the foe drags on the sow
Almost unto the battlements: the Stewart orders:
“ Now.”

The third most monstrous rock of all flies forth and
flying booms,

Big with the weight of Scotland's hate, heavy with
Southron dooms.

Full in the very centre it crashes on the beast—
Timber and hides, and limbs and lives, together mashed
like yeast !

And as the few that 'scape their doom, from under
speed them out :

" Ha ! Ha ! The sow hath farrowed," our merry
Scotsmen shout !

Crab hath cast forth his grappling hooks, hath dragged
the sow to wall,

Now pitch and faggots all ablaze upon her timbers
fall.

Thus burns that beast to ashes which rolled so stoutly
on,

The Behemoth of Berwick to meet Leviathan.

.

But as the Stewart sees her burn, comes flying news
most dire :

" The English storm St Mary's port, they've set the
gate afire.

They hold the drawbridge, hundreds strong"—but the
Stewart stays no more,

Apace he speeds, where duty leads, and stands the gate
before,

Which verily right soon shall fall, whose crannels belch
forth smoke,

While ram and pick and ax without, beat on its heart
of oak.

That desperate sickness asketh a desperate pharmacy,
The Stewart knows and open throws the gate for a
sortie.

With his kinsmen all around him, he bursts through
smoke and flame,

And by St Mary's Port they fight and put the foe to
shame,
While yet a hurtling missile from Crab's balistary
Amidships strikes another brig : her fellows put to
sea.
Thus foiled by sea and land at once, the English foe
draws off,
And the Stewart and the garrison their armour now
may doff,
And sooth to say no need have they to battle here
again,
For Randolph and the Douglas, with fifteen thousand
men,
Have won across the Border and at Mitton on the
Swale,
They hold a chapter makes the cheeks of England's
prelates pale.
Of thousands slain, three hundred priests. Which
when he knew : " My liege,"
Quoth Lancaster, " your Grace may stay, but I must
quit the siege.
Behold the Scots at Mitton : let each man look to each."
So saying, with the army's third, leaps Lancaster to
horse,
And Edward, though he rage thereat, must follow
him perforce.
Thus came it that the Lord High Stewart, at Berwick-
upon-Tweed,
Adorned those youthful brows of his with amaranthine
deed.

Chapter of Mitton
and
Events following Siege of Berwick

NOW while the gallant Stewart
Defies King Edward's might
From the battlements of Berwick,
Then sallies forth to fight,
No laggards are Douglas and Randolph ;
With fifteen thousand men
They pass o'er England's border,
They haste o'er field and fen ;
For a glittering prize awaits them
At York, the English Queen ;
But when they come without the town
No queen there is within.
But William the Archbishop
Arms monks of shaven crown,
Thinks of the Standard's Battle,
Of Thurstin his renown,
And with train-bands and levies
To aid his high emprise,
Goes forth to meet the foemen,
With valour not o'erwise.
At Mitton Scotland waited,
By the bickering river Swale,
As o'er the bridge the English passed,
But on the eastern gale

Float heavy clouds of fume and reek :
 The hayricks set afire !
 And while the English wonder,
 The Scots wreak vengeance dire ;
 For between them and the crossing
 An iron band of Scots
 Breaks like a wedge an oaken plank :
 Ah, bitter are the lots
 Of many a priest and prelate !
 Three hundred priests fall slain !
 By surplice white o'er armour dight
 Short is the shrift they gain.
 Four thousand men were slaughtered,
 As fell September's brown,
 Of twenty thousand English men
 That ventured forth the town.
 And this the jest the Scotsmen made
 Of all these Churchmen's bale :
 " Douglas hath holden Chapter
 At Mitton by the Swale."

The Earls and Barons of Scotland,
 (And the Stewart signed with these),
 Writ a letter from Arbroath
 And sent it over seas.
 It bore for superscription :
 " To His Holiness the Pope : "

And on the parchment were engrossed
 Brave Scotsmen's will and hope.
 Now after the preamble
 They speak of Robert Brus,
 Their lawful King was crowned at Scone,
 Whom homage none refuse.

They speak of the King of England :
 “ We will fight with one accord,
While an hundred of us yet draw breath,
 Ere we own an overlord.
We fight for liberty,” they writ,
 Which a good man loseth never,
So he be stout of heart and hand,
 But he lose with life together.
Not for riches nor for glory
 We fight, but for our home,
And lo, the jewel liberty
 We dare proclaim at Rome.
This letter Adam de Gordon
 And Edward Mabuissou
Bore to the Pope, where then he lay
 At sylvan Avignon.
Pope John the Twenty Second
 He conned it o’er and o’er,
Then writ to Edward of England
 And prayed to stay the war.
But Edward of Caernarvon
 Flushed red with feckless ire,
And Holyrood, Dryburgh, Melrose,
 Plundered and set afire.
But the Brus had made a desert
 Where the English army trod,
And when they homeward turned their steps,
 Burning the shrines of God,
Randolph and Douglas waiting
 Like eagles in the lift,
Swooped down upon the vaward
 And gave it bloody shrift.

With an hundred thousand soldiers
 King Edward fared him forth :
 Distemper and the Scotsmen's sword
 Slew sixteen in the north.
 At Biland Abbey Edward
 Drew breath on Yorkshire soil,
 His heart leaps in his bosom
 When the walls of Norham foil
 King Robert and the Stewart,
 But scarce these news are known
 When marching in battle order
 Is King Robert's banner shewn.
 With him the gallant Stewart
 Displays his fesse checky,
 That from the walls of Berwick
 Had waved triumphantly.
 Hardly hath Edward of England
 The time to gain the hill,
 When the men of Robert of Scotland
 The plain beneath it fill.
 With his back to the Abbey of Biland
 King Edward thinks him sure,
 For the sole narrow upward way
 His men at arms secure.
 But the gallant Sir James of Douglas,
 And Randolph as volunteer,
 With the pennons of knights around him,
 Rides forth this way to clear.
 But Cobham and Thomas Ughtred
 Meet might with equal might,
 And on the heads of Scotland's brave
 Fall rocks from every height.

Right bloody raged the battle,
And the Brus as he scrys the fray
Bethinks him of the stratagem
That long since won the day,
When the Lord of Lorn above him
Rock-perched, seemed sound and safe
As now his brother of England ;
So presently he gave
To the men of Argyll orders
That they could well obey :
They shall climb the rocky hillside
Full half a mile away ;
Then creeping, as is their custom,
With their brethren of the Isles,
They shall fall upon King Edward,
That his lofty perch beguiles.
Thus did they, and seized the summit,
While Randolph and Douglas slew
All the English barred their passage ;
Again King Edward knew
All the bitterness of fleeing—
Treasure and baggage lost
And the Privy Seal of England
A second time is tossed
Beneath the hooves of horses,
As they gallop on their way,
For the Lord High Stewart of Scotland
Is on his heels, perfay.
De Sully, the French Grand Butler,
Earl Richmond of Brittany,
And many another less knight
Must crave Scots clemency.

But for the King of England,
 The Stewart and five hundred horse
 Thunder across the valley
 To seize him on his course.
 But the gates of York are open
 And the King hath sanctuary,
 While the gallant High Stewart of Scotland
 Waits that he yet may see,
 Will the King not issue to battle,
 Will he not come forth to save
 His kingly honour tarnished ?—
 No trumpet answer gave.
 Then friend to bold adventurers,
 The silvery moon rose fair,
 And as the Stewart rode to camp
 She kissed his golden spur.
 Yea, while the sword of Scotland
 Is gripped in Brus's hand,
 'Tis England sues for respite,
 As he sweepeth bare the land.
 Cattle and herds of captives,
 And gold to win the truce
 Must come from England's coffers
 To the coffers of Scotland's Brus.
 This truce was signed by Walter,
 The gallant Lord High Stewart,
 And as we turn its pages,
 We think his life secured.
 But his life was a war-bred blossom,
 A white rose tinct with red,
 And ere the truce had run its course
 The Stewart's soul was fled.

He died in his moated Castle,
His years were but thirty and three :
Those pearls upon his sepulchre
Are the tears of his own countree.

Raid on England followed by Peace
and Marriage of David Brus
with the Princess Joanna

WHILE King Robert was in leaguer,
Was born his son and heir
By his second queen, Elizabeth,
And thus the Stewarts were

One step removèd from the throne,
One step but only one,
For the son of the Lord High Stewart
Must follow the King's own son.
In the kirk at Cambuskenneth,
The clergy and barons both,
And the people of Scotland together,
To the Princes twain took oath.
First to David Brus, the King's son,
Then to Robert Stewart if he
Should die and leave no heir to reign,
They did swear fealty.
And in the realm of England
A mighty change there was,
King Edward lost both life and crown :
Rich was England for the loss !
Edward the Third was youthful,
Scarce fourteen years had he,
When he began his mighty reign,
But England's regency,

Writ letters unto Scotland,
Did kindle Brus's ire
That he the north of England
Consumed with sword and fire.
For they sent a courteous missive,
And craved again a truce
Of the nobles of Scotland only,
Nor spake of their King the Brus.
Thus the Douglas and the Randolph
Went forth to harry and burn,
And the might of mighty England
These mightier Scots can spurn.
For the English gat not to them
And many a night and day
Tracked them o'er marsh and forest,
Which the Scot knew better than they.
Then the herald of Edward of England
Craved that the Scot would deign
Come down from his rocky eerie,
Come meet him on the plain.
This answer made those chieftains :
" We will not now descend,
We have harried and burned your country
And where we will we wend.
But come ye up and fight us,
We fear ye not at all—
Lo the Douglas payed ye a visit,
In your king's ear did he call,
As he cut the tent ropes royal,
Then scathless galloped away ;
Come forth, ye nobles of England,
Avenge your king, we say."

'Twas thus to the herald of England
 Answered the lusty Scot,
And safely over the Border
 His men and booty brought.
Then the young King of England
 Burst forth in tearful woe,
When scathless across the Border
 Flitted the eagle foe.
Vainly the nobles of England
 Cursed Regent Mortimer,
And cried aloud for steady peace,
 Since the Treasury was bare,
And bare of any captain
 To match our doughty pair,
And bare of Robert Brus to King
 The land and people were.
Thus as they fell lamenting
 Burst Robert Brus again
Over the eastern Border,
 And in his steel-clad train
Came every Scot in Scotland,
 Fit to march with Scotland's crown,
And before the walls of Norham
 The King of Scots sat down.
Douglas and Randolph of Moray,
 They stand at the King's right hand,
As he orders the siege of Alnwick,
 Bids harry Nothumberland.
Randolph and James of Douglas
 Right glad of heart are they,
As their esquires fit their armour on,
 Ere they fare them forth to fray.

And through the Scotsmen's leaguer
The summoning clarion rings,
That to the banners of each chief
That chief's whole muster brings.
But lo, as the three together,
By the royal banner stand,
Comes a messenger a-gallop
With a missive in his hand ;
He throws him from his saddle,
Before the King kneels low,
And the missive of proud England
Sets Scotland's cheeks aglow.
Quoth the King to Douglas and Randolph,
To those mighty Captains twain :
" My lords, my lords, we must sheath our swords,
Else England pleads in vain.
For they proffer the child Johanna,
Princess of England, to wed
With my only son Prince David,
Was born in lawful bed.
What say ye, shall we take them,
The Princess and her peace ?
Or shall we on to London town
Gar crave it on their knees ? "

Ah ! then, four eyes of eagle
Flashed answer to the Brus :
" Sire, let us on to London town,
There shall ye better chuse."

Quoth the Brus : " My Lords, I thank ye,
I knew your warlike mind ;
The pen shall carve as much as swords,
Ere any peace be signed."

Then the Brus bade write a letter,
 Sealed and writ his name below,
And bade the messenger haste back
 That they his will should know.
Now in this letter was enwrit
 That ere the Scots would treat,
Or move an ell from English soil
 Their enemy, to wit,
King Edward and his nobles,
 And England's whole estate,
Must solemnly forswear, renounce
 That legacy of hate,
Their claim to play the tyrant
 As feudal overlord,
Which the first Edward lying made,
 By Scotland is abhorred.
Now the most power in England
 Lay with Regent Mortimer
Who knew the Brus and his Scotsmen,
 What manner of men they were ;
He knew the Treasure empty,
 The army worn away
In the long war which ever
 Did on England's vitals prey.
He knew that if he yield not
 This thing were soon to see :
The Lion Scots on London Tower
 Triumphant, floating free.
'Twas thus young Edward of England
 In the deed of renouncement spake :
" Whereas we kings of England
 Unlawfully did make

Claim to the feudal lordship
Of the Kingdom of Scotland, we
And our prelates, barons and commons
In Parliament agree
That the Kingdom of Scotland ever
To the Prince Magnificent,
To the Lord Robert, King of Scots,
Our ally and dear friend,
And to his heirs for ever
Entire and separate
By its marches from our England
Shall remain, and here is made
Renouncement of all treaties
For us and for our heirs,
Touching the thralldom of Scotland,
And Henry Percy swears,
Our cousin, by these present
Upon our kingly soul,
That we will faithful keep our oath,
And will perform the whole.”
Thus by the mouth of Percy
The King of England sware,
And thus the firstlings of the peace
By England offered were.
Now when between the kingdoms
The peace was signed and sealed,
Thus to the people of both lands
Were the chiefest parts revealed.
First then, the child Prince David
With the child Princess should wed,
Who if he die shall England choose
That Scots Prince in his stead,

Who stands the nighest to the throne,
 To wed this same Princess,
So be it that most Holy Church
 Such royal union bless ;
Which failing, then shall England choose
 From out her maids blood-royal
Another princess for the prince,
 And thus for ever loyal
And good allies these states shall be,
 Nor fall at variance ;
Yet always saving to the Scots
 Their ancient friend of France.
But what most teased the English
 And most rejoiced the Scot
Was the covenant, that Scotland's stone
 Which the first Edward got
From Scone and set in Westminster
 Should to the Scots return :
But when they seek to move the stone
 The men of London spurn
Those that would bear the fatal stone
 Forth from the Minster's fane,
And surging round Westminster walls
 All hope to pass is vain.
Thus came it that the English keep
 And treasure there to-day
Our fatal stone that long ago
 King Edward bare away.
Now the Princess Johanna of England
 With the Queen Dowager,
With the Chancellor of England
 And the Earl of Mortimer,

Fared forth in regal splendour,
As Princes do that wive,
And seven year old was David Prince,
And the Princess she was five.
But as she passed the Border
There the Douglas and Randolph stood,
Each kissed her hand, each led her rein,
And she was gay and good.
They came to Berwick-upon-Tweed
And there the wedding pealed
As the little bride and bridegroom
The new-made peace annealed.
From the baggage that came with her
They took the parchment scroll
Bearing their names that homage paid
From Edward's Ragman's Roll.
But soon they passed from Berwick,
To Edinburgh town,
Where King Robert rose to greet them,
Though with disease struck down.
He shews to them his lion,
A-pacing in his den,
And sadly fall his eyes on them :
They look—he smiles again.
He tells them tales of fairy,
A child on either knee,
And the little Princess will dare caress
His bearded majesty.
Ah ! how his kind heart yearned then
For the Stewart of olden years,
And the sorrows of a grandfather
Were in his father's tears.

“ Do thou guard well Prince David,”
 To the boy Stewart he said—
With his great hand a little hand
 In a least hand he laid.
(How oft, how oft our Scotland’s throne
 Do age and skill forsake !—
The crown upon a wee bairn’s head
 Makes many an head to ache.)
But whiles they yet were with him,
 Laughter and mirth they knew,
Nor guessed how soon that kindly smile
 Would vanish from their view.
Then, for he felt his ills increase,
 And tranquil would abide,
The good King Robert fared him forth
 To Cardross upon Clyde.
There stands his four-square Castle
 And his nobles there resort,
And there the good King Robert keeps
 His kingly, simple court,
And there largesse on all that ail,
 On all that want bestows ;
The while they thank they wonder yet :
 “ So great, but kens our woes.”
For his pleasure oft King Robert seeks
 The marsh where bitterns dwell,
And with his peregrine on wrist
 He knows the moment well,
To cast the jesses off, and lo !
 Falcon and quarry soar
In æry circles, till they seem
 Two dots and nothing more.

Then sudden is the quarry strook :
Down, down they flash amain,
Falling as falls a feathery star,
The slayer and the slain.
Such are his pleasures while he may,
Soon from his oaken bed
He marks the owl-soft wings of death
Hovering above his head.

Portrait of Robert Brus

NOW what more shall be told of the King ?
Round his banner our memories cling :
We have witnessed his might both in
council and fight :

Of his figure and face I would sing.

His body was tall and well-made,
Round his neck the close ringlets they played,
And his mightiness grew as he battled or slew
The red deer in his green forest glade.

Was he swarthy, or ruddy and fair ?
No word nor no image declare :
This only we know that his forehead was low
And his cheekbones were lofty and bare.

His manner was gentle and kind,
Frank and cheerful his royal great mind,
And the battle once o'er there was nobody more
To the faults of his enemy blind.

Yet King Robert of Scots could be stern,
And his look like the lightning could burn,
As when from his face fled the priest in disgrace,
Or the sun rose upon Bannockburn.

In the prowess of chivalry few
Were the equals King Robert e'er knew :

E'en the English declared that of knights he was
third :

Quoth the Scots : " We'd fain see the first two."

With the glamour of ancient romance
Would the Brus oft his hearers entrance ;
As he told they'd exclaim of some paladin's fame :
" We ken one has done equal perchance."

Like King Richard of England he might
Have been nought but a brave errant knight,
But the love of his land ever went hand-in-hand
With the longing for liberty's light.

Ah how oft hath the genius of war
Had more curses than blessings in store !—
But with Robert the Brus this had only one use :
All she'd lost to his land to restore.

The last Counsel of Robert Brus to his People

SOON ere the end of the end calls the King his
people together ;
Great men and little they come, thronging
the palace of Brus.

“ Let them come, let them come,” cries the King, and
they strive for a sight of the helmet

Crowned with the Bannockburn crown, enter and
stand where they chuse.

For the Brus knowing well that his days and his doings
on earth are numbered,

Wills yet once to appear, king of a warrior race.

Wearing his armour of proof towers the Brus a colossus
above them ;

Nighest his grandsire’s throne, Robert the Stewart
hath place.

Douglas and Randolph arrayed in the pictured habit
of nobles,

Nighest the Stewart they stand, sorrowful visaged
indeed.

None weareth armour save Brus, as he speaketh his last
benediction,

Taking farewell of his folk giveth an ultimate rede.

Pallid his countenance seems and his voice cometh
forth from his bosom

Even as an oracle should, spoken in Delphi of old.

192 The last Counsel of Robert Brus

“ Lo I have made ye free, yet no man knoweth the
future,

 All men must yield unto death, though they be
 never so bold.

Here be my captains twain, here my daughter's son,
the High Stewart,

 Two that be ready to lead, three when a beard
 shall be grown.

Yet though they stand thus firm, none knoweth the hap
of the morrow ;

 Douglas and Randolph shall die, for the folk is
 immortal alone.

Therefore my people to ye, to ye and my nobles I speak
it :

 Grave ye my words in your hearts, hand to
 posterity down.

Wars ye shall yet have a many, but allies three ever
with ye,

 Allies posted of God, guarding the free Scots crown :
The mountain, the marsh and the forest ; with them
 shall ye ever take refuge,

 Driving your herds to the glen, wasting the
 country with fire.

See ye gang ever afoot, let your arms be the ax of battle,
Ay and the spear and the bow, these shall achieve
your desire.

Let your watchmen give ever alarm, let them howl
as the wolf of Ben Nevis,

 Harass the foeman by day, hunt him in dreams o'
 the night,

Famine and terror let lead 'gainst the foemen of Scotland
battalions,

Ere the Scots warrior come forth, joyous and hale
in his might."

Thus was the counsel of Brus who, leaning his hand on
the shoulder,

Offered of Robert the Stewart, once more looked
forth on his folk.

Then with an arm upraised, called down on them
blessing of Heaven,

Then passed forth from the hall, wearing their love
for a cloak.

Last Request of the Brus to the Douglas

NOW when the Brus had all things well
ordained
So far as mind of mortal could achieve,
He called Sir James the Douglas and to
him

Unveiled his inward vow and heart's desire.
And thus he spake : " Sir James, thou knowest well
How that I have full long and strenuous striven
To hold this realm of Scotland and her rights,
That now I hold by grace of God on high.
Know thou that once when close by foes beset
I vowed a solemn vow, and deep I grieve
That I may not fulfil it ere I die.
Hearken, O dearest friend, unto the vow.
Thus was it : once my wars and labours done
I vowed to pass unto the Holy Land
And there unto the utmost of my power
To battle with the enemies of God.
Lo ! I have laboured hardly all my years,
And now with grievous malady stricken down
Have nought to do but die.

Now seeing this body
May not accomplish what this heart desires,
I have resolved, this heart of me shall fare
Forth from this body ; journeying overseas

It shall wage war upon the Infidel.
 And for I know not any knight than thee
 More hardy nor more fit for high emprise,
 I do hereby entreat thee, tried and true,
 My friend most dear, that for the love of me
 Thou wilt assume this voyage and acquit
 The debt I owe my Saviour, for I hold
 So lofty knowledge of thy nobleness
 That whatsoever thou shalt undertake
 That am I well persuaded thou wilt do.
 Thus shall I die in peace, if thou wilt vow.
 These be my wishes : first, when I am dead,
 Thou shalt pluck out my heart and let embalm ;
 Then of my treasure shalt thou take so much
 As will suffice thee for thy journeying,
 Thee and thy company, and thou shalt bear
 My heart and lay in Holy Sepulchre,
 Since this poor body may not thither pass.
 And I command thee, use such royal state
 And maintenance upon your voyaging
 That unto whatsoever lands ye come
 All men may know thou bearest overseas
 The heart of Robert Brus, the King of Scots."
 Thus spake he, and all they that heard did weep.
 But when Sir James made answer, wet for tears
 Came forth his words, and all with memories fraught
 Of peril shared, of brotherhood in arms,
 Hand within hand through all their stormy years,
 " Most noble and most gentle King and friend,
 A thousand times I thank thee and again
 A thousand times, for this last great behest
 Thou layest on me, that I keep and bear

196 Last Request of the Brus to the Douglas

Thy heart, the treasure, to the Holy Land.

Most faithful to the utmost of my powers

I will obey thee, though not worthy I

An enterprize so lofty, arduous."

" Ah ! gentle knight," made answer then the King,

" My heart's thanks hast thou, if thou dost my will,

Vowing upon the word of loyal knight,

That thou wilt duly compass and achieve."

" Now hear me swear," quoth Douglas, " on the faith
I owe to God, to knighthood and to thee."

" Now praise to God," quoth Brus, " for I shall die

At peace and quiet, seeing the knight of all

Most valiant in my kingdom hath made vow

To wreak that for me, which I may not wreak."

Thus spake the Brus, and clasped the Douglas hand,

And those that by the couch were gathered round

Withdrew them whiles those ancient champions

Held commune of the things beyond the grave.

And after these full soon the king was sped :

But to the heart of hearts thus it befell.

The Douglas and the Heart of Brus

WHEN the Brus was at rest in Dunfermline,
Not at rest, not at rest was his Heart,
But in casket of gold and in ermine
Enwrapped till the Douglas depart,
It lay on the white marble altar,
Where Scotland shed tear upon tear,
For the heart of the lover shall falter
When parting is near.

To the caravel moored at the jetty,
All crimson in daïs and sail,
Where the Right Lion Scots ever ready
Rides free on the wings of the gale,
Comes the Douglas, the waves are a-roaring
To welcome the Heart of the King,
Wild sea-birds are shrieking and soaring,
Crowds kneel in the ling.

The spray flies in tears on their faces
And mingles with tears of their eyes,
As he carries the Heart to the daïs,
Where at rest 'mid the tempest it lies,

198 The Douglas and the Heart of Brus

Then more loud than the furious north-wester :
Quoth the Douglas, " My Lords, by St Bride,
We shall ken if our ships' o' the best ere
We come o'er the tide."

Then the Douglas bids straightway slip cable ;
With a plunge like a war-horse set free
From the stalls of the Earth-Shaker's ¹ stable
She marries the sea ;
While the Douglas and St Clair and Logan
Hold fast by the rail with a hand,
And the boom of the surf drowns the slogan,
They sound on the land.

Then obedient to the King's order
The Douglas casts anchor at Sluys,
Where he welcometh all men aboard her
In the name of the Heart of the Brus.
All the vessels they drink of are golden,
Their platters are all of red gold,
Vair, samite and satin unfolden,
Soft fold upon fold,

From the chests of the vessel that bore them,
On couch and on daïs they fling,
And the arms on the canopy o'er them
Are the arms of the King.
For in all things the Douglas was loyal
And remembered the words that he spake,
How the voyage of the Heart should be royal
And grand for his sake.

¹ Neptune.

The Douglas and the Heart of Brus 199

Then the herald, as Brus had ordained it,
 Went with banner and trumpet ashore
And parading the town he proclaimed it,
 Reëchoing o'er and o'er ;
That all gallant knights whatsoever,
 Whom the wisdom of Douglas should chuse,
Might make this adventure together
 With heart of the Brus.

To the banner of Scotland there rallied
 Three knights that came forth of Almayn ;
Out to sea from the harbour they sallied
 And set them for Spain ;
Past Cornwall and Brittany sailing,
 The Pillars of Hercules past,
Till the skill of their Captain unfailing
 Finds Seville at last.

Here the King of the Spains sends them greeting
 And gifts both of jewels and gold,
But the Douglas replies they are seeking
 What may not be given nor sold ;
But lo ere they part they are willing
 To combat the Infidel there,
Thus the wish of the monarch fulfilling,
 Whose Heart 'tis they bear.

Then greatly Alfonso rejoiceth,
 Thus aided the Moor to o'erwhelm,
And the rumour of Douglas he noiseth
 Through the length and the breadth of the
 realm,

200 The Douglas and the Heart of Brus

So that knights come to greet him full many,
 And hugely they honour the Heart,
And of fame such as Douglas, not any
 But longs for a part.

The Moor cometh forth in his splendour,
 Quoth Alfonso to Douglas, " Be thine
To lead forth the vaward, I render
 To Douglas the place that is mine."
And he gave him the flower of his knighthood,
 And the Scots rallied all round their chief,
Save the St Clair that more to the right stood,
 Should bring him relief.

As the clarion soundeth the onslaught,
 From its chain doth the Douglas make loose
The casket with lions thereon wrought,
 That holdeth the Heart of the Brus.
" O Heart," quoth the Douglas, " that ever
 Wast wont with the foremost to fight,
Lo I cast thee before me and ever
 Shall win thee aright."

Then he casts it and crying his war-cry :
 A Douglas ! A Douglas ! he dives
Through the Moors where he sees it afar lie :
 He mows like a reaper their lives.
He wins it again, but the St Clair !
 Behold how the Moors round him press !
Dig the spurs deep, O Douglas, and win there,
 To aid his distress !

The Douglas and the Heart of Brus 201

To the Douglas come Scots of his battle,
Have spied him and forward they spur,
And their passage voids many a saddle,
And soon they are by the St Clair ;
But no prowess of lance can avail them,
Where the odds are as fifty for one :
Cries the Douglas, " Our lives let us sell them
Right dearly each one."

Thus they meet with their death, for they ask it,
Yea, the best of all deaths they have died,
And the Heart of the Brus, in the casket
Lies close at the Douglas' side.
St Andrew of Scotland watched o'er it,
O'er the body of Douglas St Bride ;
Good Sir William of Keith 'twas that bore it
Again o'er the tide

With the Heart of the Brus and they laid them,
The Heart of the King at Melrose,
As the good Earl of Moray he bade them,
But the bones of the Douglas repose
In the Kirk of St Bride 'neath the marble,
Where yet ye shall view an ye please
Of marvels the mightiest marvel :
The Douglas at peace.

Thus King Robert gat not all his craving,
Though better he'd deem had been done
Than if nothing of perilous braving
To the Sepulchre Douglas had won ;

202 The Douglas and the Heart of Brus

And I doubt not, if ever hereafter
 Be granted to hearts that are true,
In Elysian fields to foregather,
 That the Brus give his due

To the friend that so loyally carried
 The Heart of his friend that was King,
And will joy that in Seville he tarried
 The Heart in mid-battle to fling.
As ye turn this last leaf of our story,
 Give ye praise to the Brus that secured
To our Scotland the summit of glory,
 The crown to the Stewart.

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